

THE
DESCRIPTION, REASONS, AND REWARD
OF THE
Believer's Walking with God:

ON GENESIS v. 24.

AND
THE CHRISTIAN'S
CONVERSE WITH GOD;
OR THE INSUFFICIENCY AND UNCERTAINTY OF
HUMAN FRIENDSHIP,
AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF SOLITUDE IN
CONVERSE WITH GOD.

WITH SOME OF THE AUTHOR'S BREATHINGS AFTER HIM.

BY RICHARD BAXTER.

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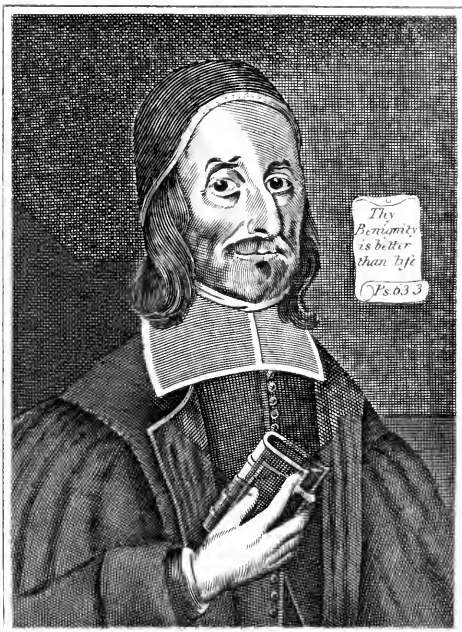
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RICHARD BAXTER, AGED 76

*Thru all vain world-as thou hast been to me
 Dust & a shadow, those I leave with thee:
 The unseen vital substance I commit
 To him that's substance, life, light, love to thee.
 The leaves & fruit are dropt, for seed is sown,
 Heavens tiers to generate, to heal & feed,
 Them also thou wilt flutter & molest,
 But shall not keep from everlasting rest*

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WALKING WITH GOD.

GEN. v. 24.

*And Enoch walked with God: and he was not;
for God took him.*

CHAPTER I.

BEING to speak of our converse with God in solitude, I think it will not be unsuitable, nor unserviceable to the ends of that discourse, if I here premise a short description of the general duty of practical godliness, as it is called in scripture a walking with God. It is here commended to us in the example of holy Enoch, whose excellency is recorded in this signal character, that "he walked with God:" and his special reward expressed in the words following "and he was not; for God took him." I shall speak most of his character, and then somewhat of his reward.

The Samaritan and vulgar Latin versions, do strictly translate the Hebrew as we read it: but the interpretation of the Septuagint, the Syriac, the Chaldee and the Arabic, are rather good

expositions (all set together) of the meaning of the word, than strict translations. The Septuagint and Syriac read it " Enoch pleased God." The Chaldee hath " Enoch walked in the fear of God:" and the Arabic " he walked in obedience to God." And indeed to walk in the fear and obedience of God, and thereby to please him, is the principal thing in our " walking with God." The same character is given of Noah in Gen. vi. 19. and the extraordinary reward annexed; he and his family were saved in the deluge. And the holy life which God commanded Abraham is called " a walking before God." Gen. xvii. 1. " Walk before me, and be thou perfect." And in the New Testament the christian conversation is ordinarily called by the name of " walking." Sometime a walking in Christ: as Col. ii. 6. Sometime a walking in the Spirit, in which we live. Gal. v. 25. And a walking after the Spirit. Rom. viii. 1. Sometime a walking in the light, as God is in the light. 1 John i. 7. Those that abide in Christ must so walk even as he hath walked. 1 John ii. 6. These phrases set together tell us, what it is to walk with God. But I think it not unprofitable somewhat more particularly to shew you what this walking with God doth contain.

As atheism is the sum of wickedness, so all true religiousness is called by the name of godliness or holiness, which is nothing else but our

devotedness to God, and living to him, and our relation to him as thus devoted in heart and life. Practical atheism is a living as without God in the world. Ephes. ii. 12. Godliness is contrary to practical atheism, and is a living as with and to God in the world and in the church, and is here called a walking with God. And it containeth in it these particulars.

1. To walk with God includeth the practical acknowledgment (that is made by the will as well as the understanding) of the grand attributes of God, and his relations to man; that he is infinite in his being, that is, immense and eternal; as also in his power, wisdom and goodness: that he is the creator, redeemer and sanctifier: that he is our absolute lord (or owner;) our most righteous governor, and most bountiful benefactor (or father:) that of him, and through him, and to him are all things: that in him we live, and move, and have our being: that he is the fountain, or first cause from which all (proper) being, truth and goodness in the creature is but a derived stream. To have the soul unfeignedly resign itself to him, as his own; and subject itself to him as our governor, walking in the awe of his sovereign power; sensible of the strong obligation of his laws, which reason, justice and necessity do all command us to obey. To live as in full dependance on him; to have the first and greatest respect unto him: a more observant

respect to him than to our rulers: a more obedient respect to him than to our masters: a more dependant tender and honorable respect to him than to parents, or our nearest friends. Thus he that cometh to God (as God, and so as to be accepted of him) must believe that he is, (his essential attributes) and (what he is in his relations to man; especially that as our governor and benefactor) he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. Heb. xi. 6. The impress of a deity in his essential and relative attributes must be upon the heart of him that walks with God: yea, the being of God must be much more remarkable to him, than the being of all creatures; and his presence more regarded, than the presence of the creature; and all things must be to us in comparison of God, as a candle is in comparison of the sun: his greatness and transcendant excellencies must so overpower them all, as to make them less observed and regarded, by his taking up our chief observation and regard.

2. Our walking with God includeth our reconciliation to him, and that we are not in our natural state of enmity, but made his children and friends in Christ. Can two walk together unless they be agreed? Amos iii. 3. Enmity is against unity; disaffection causeth aversion, and flying from each other: yea, the fears of a guilty child may make him fly from his father's presence, till there be a particular

reconciliation besides the general state of reconciliation. A provoking faulty child doth dwell with God his Father, though under the continual terror of his frowns: but to walk with him (in the full sense) is more than to be related to him, and to dwell with him: in a large sense indeed all God's children may be said to walk with him, as it signifieth only a conversation ordered in godliness, sincerity and simplicity: but in this sublimer sense, as it signifieth a lively exercise of faith and love, and heavenly-mindedness, and a course of complacential contemplation, and holy converse with God, so it is proper only to some of the sounder and more vigilant industrious believers. And hereto it is necessary, not only that we be justified and reconciled to God from our state of enmity, but also that we be pardoned, justified and reconciled from our particular wounding falls, which are more than the ordinary infirmities of believers. And also it is necessary that we have grateful friendly thoughts of God: that we have so much sense of his excellency, goodness and kindness to ourselves, as may give us a complacency in conversing with him, and may make the thoughts and mention of him to be desirable and pleasing to us. Walking with God doth import, though not the full assurance of his special love and grace to us, yet such an apprehension of his love and goodness, as may draw the heart to think of him with desire, if not

with delight. A lothness to draw near him, to think of him, or to mention him, a weariness of his special service, are contrary to this special walking with God.

3. Our walking with God, doth include our esteeming and intending him as the ultimate end and felicity of our souls. He is not to be sought, or loved, or conversed with, as a means to any greater good (for there is no greater) nor as inferior, or merely equal unto any: his goodness must be the most powerful attractive of our love; his favor must be valued as our happiness; and the pleasing of him must be our most industrious employment. To walk with him, is to live in the warming reviving sunshine of his goodness, and to feel a delighting satisfying virtue in his love and gracious presence: to live as those that are not their own, and that have their lives, and faculties, and provisions, and helps for their master's service: as a horse or dog is of so much worth, as he is of use to him that owneth him; and that is the best that is the most serviceable to his master: yet with this very great difference, that man being a more noble and capacious creature, is admitted not only into a state of service, but of sonship, and friendship, and communion with God; and is allowed and appointed to share more in the pleasure and fruits of his services, and to put in his own felicity and delight into his end; not only because self-love is natural and necessary

to the creature, but also because he is under the promise of a reward ; and (more than either) because he is a lover, and not only a servant, and his work is principally a work of love, and therefore his end is *finis amantis*, the end of a lover, which is mutual complacency in the exercises of love.

He that seeketh not first the kingdom and righteousness of God, and referreth not other things to him, but seeks first the creature, and God only for it, doth but deny God in his heart, and basely subject him to the works of his own hands, and doth not walk with God, but vilify and reject him. If you live not to God, even to obey, and please, and honor him, you do not walk with him ; but walk contrary to him (by living to his enemies, the flesh, the world, and the devil) and therefore God will walk contrary to you. Levit. xxvi. 21, 23, 24, 27, 28. You were both created and redeemed, though for your own felicity, yet principally for the glory and pleasure of your creator and redeemer ; and for no felicity of your own, but what consisteth in pleasing him, glorifying him, and enjoying him : whether therefore we eat or drink, or whatever we do, it should all be done to the glory of God. 1 Cor. x. 31. He that regardeth a day, or regardeth it not ; he that eateth, or that eateth not, must do it to the Lord : (and though a good intention will not sanctify a forbidden action, yet sins of ignorance and mere

frailty are forborne and pardoned of God, when it is his glory and service that is sincerely intended, though there be a mistake in the choice of means.) “None of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself: for whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore or die, we are the Lord’s: for to this end Christ both died, rose and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.” Rom. xiv. 7—9. Our walking with God, is a serious laboring, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. 2 Cor. v. 9. To this the love of our Redeemer must constrain us: “For he died for all, that they which live, should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him that died for them, and rose again.” ver. 15. Religion therefore is called the seeking of God, because the soul doth press after him, and labor to enjoy him, as the runner seeks to reach the prize; or as a suitor seeketh the love and fruition of the person beloved. And all the particular acts of religion are oft denominated from this intention of the end, and following after it; and are all called a seeking the Lord. Conversion is called a seeking the Lord. Isa. lv. 6. “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found.” Hos. iii. 5. “The children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God.” Hos. vii. 10. “They do not return to the Lord their God, nor seek him:” Men that are called

to conversion, are called to seek God. Hos. x. 12. "Break up your fallow ground, for it is time to seek the Lord till he come and rain righteousness upon you." The converted children of Israel and Judah shall go weeping together to seek the Lord their God. Jer. l. 4. The wicked are described to be men that do not seek the Lord. Isa. ix. 13. xxxi. 1. The holy covenant, 2 Chron. xv. 12, 13. was to seek the Lord. If therefore you would walk with God, let him be the mark, the prize, the treasure, the happiness, the heaven itself which you aim at, and sincerely seek. 1 Chron. xxii. 19. "Now set your heart and your soul to seek the Lord your God." Ps. cv. 3, 4. "Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord: seek the Lord and his strength, seek his face for evermore." As the life of a covetous man is a seeking of riches, and the life of an ambitious man is a seeking of worldly honor and applause; so the life of a man that liveth to God, is a seeking him, to please him, honor him, and enjoy him: and so much of this as he attaineth, so much doth he attain of satisfaction and content. If you live to God, and seek him as your end and all, the want of any thing will be tolerable to you, which is but consistent with the fruition of his love. If he be pleased, man's displeasure may be borne: the loss of all things if Christ be won, will not undo us. Man's condemnation of us signifieth but little,

if God the absolute judge do justify us. He walketh not with God, that liveth not to him as his only happiness and end.

4. Moreover, our walking with God includeth our subjection to his authority, and our taking his wisdom and will to be our guide, and his laws in nature and scripture for our rule: you must not walk with him as his equals, but as his subjects; nor give him the honor of an ordinary superior, but of the universal King: in our doubts he must resolve us; and in our straits we must ask counsel of the Lord. "Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?" is one of the first words of a penitent soul; Acts ix. 6, when sensual worldlings do first ask the flesh, or those that can do it hurt or good, what they would have them be or do. None of Christ's true subjects, do call any man father or master on earth, but in subordination to their highest Lord. Matt. xxiii. The authority of God doth awe them and govern them more than the fear of the greatest upon earth. Indeed they know no power but God's, and that which he committeth unto man; and therefore they can obey no man against God, whatever it cost them: but under God they are most readily and faithfully subject to their governors, not merely as to men that have power to hurt them if they disobey, but as to the officers of the Lord, whose authority they discern and reverence in them: but when they have to do with the enemies of

Christ, who usurp a power which he never gave them, against his kingdom and the souls of men, they think it easy to resolve the question, whether it be better to obey God or men. As the commands of a rebellious constable or other fellow-subject are of no authority against the king's commands; so the commands of all the men on earth, are of so small authority with them against the laws of God, that they fully approve of the ready and resolute answer of those witnesses, Dan. iii. 16—18, " We are not careful to answer thee in this matter: if it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us, &c. but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Worldlings are ruled by their fleshly interest, and wisdom, and self will, and by the will of man so far as it doth comport with these: by these you may handle them and lead them up and down the world: by these doth Satan hold them in captivity. But believers feel themselves in subjection to a higher Lord and better law, which they faithfully though imperfectly observe: therefore our walking with God is called a walking in his law. Exod. xvi. 4. A walking in his statutes, and keeping and doing his commands. Lev. xxvi. 3. A walking in his paths. Mic. iv. 2. It is our following the Lamb, which way soever he goeth: to be given up to our own hearts' lusts, and to walk in our coun-

sels, is contrary to this holy walk with God, Ps. lxxxii. 12, and is the course of those that are departed from him: and they that are far from him shall perish: he destroyeth those that go a whoring from him: but it is good for us to draw near to God. Ps. lxxiii. 27, 28.

5. Our walking with God doth imply that as we are ruled by his will, so we fear no punishment like his threatened displeasure: and that the threats of death from mortal men, will not prevail with us so much as his threats of hell. Luke xii. 4. If God say, 'I will condemn thee to everlasting punishment if thou wilt not keep my laws,' and if men say, 'We will condemn thee to imprisonment or death if thou keep them,' the believer more feareth God than man. The law of the king doth condemn Daniel to the lions' den, if he forbear not to pray for a certain time; but he more feareth God that will deny those that deny him, and forsake those that forsake him. Therefore the forementioned witnesses ventured on the fiery furnace, because God threatened a more dreadful fire. Therefore a true believer dare not live, when an unbeliever dare not die: he dare not save his life from God lest he lose it; but loseth it that he may save it. But unbelievers that walk not with God, but after the flesh, do most fear them that they observe most powerful in the world, and will more be moved with the penalty of some worldly loss or suffering, than with God's most dreadful

threats of hell: for that which they see not, is to them as nothing, while they want that faith by which it is foreknown, and must be escaped.

6. Moreover he that walks with God, doth from God expect his full reward. He ceaseth not his holy course, though no man observe him, or none commend him or approve him; though all about him hate him and condemn him; though he be so far from gaining by it with men, that it cost him all that he hath or hoped for in the world: for he knoweth that godliness is of itself great gain, and that it hath the promise of this life and that to come, and none can make God's promise void: he knoweth that his Father which seeth in secret will reward him openly, Matt. vi. and that he shall have a treasure in heaven that parteth with all on earth for Christ. Luke xviii. 22. And he hath such respect to this promised recompense of reward, that for it he can suffer with the people of God, and account the very reproach of Christ a greater treasure than court or country can afford him in a way of sin. Heb. xi. 26. He accounteth them blessed that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, because the kingdom of heaven is their's. He judgeth it a cause of exceeding joy, to be reviled and persecuted, and to have all manner of evil falsely spoken of us for the sake of Christ, because our reward in heaven is great. Matt. v. 10—12. For he verily believeth that as sure as these transitory

pleasures will have an end, and everlastingly forsake those miserable souls that were deluded by them, so certainly is there a life of endless joys, to be possessed in heaven with God and all the holy ones; and this he will trust to as that which will fully repair his losses and repay his cost, and not deceive him: let others trust to what they will, it is this that he is resolved to trust to, and venture all to make it sure (when he is sure that all is nothing which he ventureth, and that by the adventure he can never be a loser, nor never save by choosing that which itself must perish.) Thus he that truly walks with God expecteth his reward from God, and with God, and thence is encouraged in all his duty, and thence is emboldened in all his conflicts, and thence is upheld and comforted in all his sufferings; when man is the rewarder (as well as the chief ruler) of the hypocrite, and earthly things are the poise and motives to his earthly mind.

7. Our walking with God importeth that as we expect our reward from him, so also that we take his promise for our security for that reward. Believing his word and trusting his fidelity to the quieting and emboldening of the soul, is part of our holy walking with him. A promise of God is greater satisfaction and encouragement to a true believer, than all the visible things on earth: a promise of God can do more and prevail further with an upright

soul, than all the sensible objects in the world. He will do more and go further upon such a promise, than he will for all that man can give him. Peruse the life of Christ's apostles and see what a promise of Christ can do; how it made them forsake all earthly pleasures, possessions, and hopes, and part with friends, and houses, and country, and travel up and down the world, in dangers and sufferings and unwearied labors, despised and abused by great and small; and all this to preach the gospel of the kingdom which they had never seen, and to attain that everlasting happiness, and help others to attain it, for which they had nothing but the promise of their Lord. See what a promise well believed will make a christian do and suffer. Believers did those noble acts, and the martyrs underwent those torments, which are mentioned Heb. xi. because they judged him faithful that had promised. Heb. xi. 11. They considered not difficulties and defect of means and improbabilities as to second causes, nor staggered at the promise of God through unbelief; but being strong in faith gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was also able to perform, as it is said of Abraham, Rom. iv. 19—21.

8. To walk with God, is to live as in his presence, and that with desire and delight. When we believe and apprehend that wherever

we are, we are before the Lord, who seeth our hearts and all our ways; who knoweth every thought we think, and every word we speak, and every secret thing which we do: as verily to believe that God is here present and observeth all, as we do that we ourselves are here: to compose our minds, our thoughts, our affections to that holy reverence and seriousness as beseemeth man before his maker: to order our words with that care and gravity as beseems those that speak in the hearing of the Lord. That no man's presence do seem more considerable to us than his presence: as we are not moved at the presence of a fly, or worm, or dog, when persons of honor and reverence are present, so should we not comparatively be moved at the presence of man, how great, or rich, or terrible soever, when we know that God himself is present, to whom the greatest of the sons of men is more inconsiderable than a fly or worm is unto them. As the presence of the king makes ordinary standers by to be unobserved, and the discourses of the learned make us disregard the babblings of children, so the presence of God should make the greatest to be scarce observed or regarded in comparison of him: God who is still with us should so much take up our regard, that all others in his presence should be but as a candle in the presence of the sun. Therefore it is that a believer composeth himself to that behaviour which he

knoweth God doth most expect, and beseemeth those that stand before him: when others accommodate themselves to the persons that are present, observing them, pleasing them, and shewing them respect, while they take no notice of God at all, as if they believed not that he is there. Hence it is that the men of God were wont to speak (though reverently yet) familiarly of God, as children of their father with whom they dwell, as being indeed fellow-citizens with the saints, who are his household. Abraham calleth him, Gen. xxiv. 40. "The Lord before whom I walk." And Jacob, Gen. xlviii. 15. "God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked." And David resolveth, Ps. cxvi. 9. "I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living." Yea, God himself is pleased to use the terms of gracious condescending familiarity with them. Christ dwelleth in them by faith. Eph. iii. 17. His Spirit dwelleth in them as his house and temple. Rom. viii. 9. Yea the Father himself is said to dwell in them, and they in him. 1 John iii. 24. "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him:" and iv. 12. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us." 13. "Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." 15. "Whoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God." 16. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth

in God, and God in him." Yea, God is said to walk in them, as they are said to walk with him: 2 Cor. vi. 16. "For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God and they shall be my people."

Our walking with God then is not only a sense of that common presence which he must needs afford to all; but it is also a believing apprehension of his gracious presence, as our God and reconciled Father, with whom we dwell, being brought near unto him by Christ; and who dwelleth in us by his Spirit.

9. To walk with God (as here we are in flesh) includeth not only our believing his presence, but also that we see him (as the chief cause in the effects) in his creatures and his daily providence; that we look not on creatures as independent or separated from God, but see them as the glass, and God as the represented face; and see them as the letters and words, and God as the sense of all the creatures that are the first book which he appointed man to read. We must behold his glory declared by the heavens, Ps. xix. 1. and see him shining in the sun; and see his power in the fabric of the world, and his wisdom in the admirable order of the whole: we must taste the sweetness of his love in the sweetness of our food, and in the comforts of our friends, and all our accommodations: we must see and love his image in his holy ones;

and we must hear his voice in the ministry of his messengers. Thus every creature must become a preacher to us, and we must see the name of God upon it: and thus all things will be sanctified to us, while holiness to the Lord is written upon all. Though we must not therefore make idols of the creatures, because God appeareth to us in them, yet must we hear the message which they bring us, and reverence in them the name of the Creator, which they bear. By this way of conversing with them they will not ensnare us, or deceive or poison us, as they do the carnal unbelieving world: but as the fish brought money to Peter, to pay his tribute, so every creature would bring us a greater, even a spiritual gain. When we behold it, we should say, with pleasant admiration, "This is the work of God, and it is wonderful in our eyes." This is the true divine philosophy, which seeketh, and findeth, and contemplateth, and admireth the great Creator in his works; when that which sticketh in the creature itself (whatever discovery it seem to make) is but a childish unprofitable trifling; like learning to shape all the letters aright, without learning to know their signification and sense. It is God appearing in the creatures, that is the life, and beauty, and use, and excellency of all the creatures: without him they are but carcasses, deformed, useless, vain, insignificant and very nothings.

10. Our walking with God doth contain our

willing and sincere attendance on him, in the use of those holy duties in which he hath appointed us to expect his grace. He is every where in his essential presence, but he is not every where alike to be found in the communications of his grace. The assemblies of his saints that worship him in holy communion, are places where he is likelier to be found, than in an alehouse or a playhouse. You are likelier to have holy converse with him among the holy, that will speak of holy things to your edification, than among the senseless ignorant sensualists, and the scornful enemies of holiness, that are the servants of the devil, whom he useth in his daily work for the deceiving and perdition of the world. Therefore the conversation of the wicked doth grieve and vex a righteous soul (as it is said the Sodomites' did by Lot, 2 Pet. ii. 7, 8.) because all their conversation is ungodly, far from God, not savouring of any true knowledge of him or love to him, but is against him by enmity and provocation. If God himself do dwell and walk in all his holy ones, then they that dwell and walk with them, have the best opportunity to dwell and walk with God. To converse with those in whom God dwelleth, is to converse with him in his image, and to attend him at his dwelling: and wilfully to run among the wicked, is to run far away from God. In his temple doth every man speak of his glory, Ps. xxix. 9, when among his brutish enemies

every man speaketh to the dishonor of him in his word and ways. He is otherwise present with those that are congregated in his name and for his worship, than he is with those that are assembled for wickedness or vanity, or live as brutes without God in the world. And we must draw as near him as we can, if we would be such as walk with God.

We must not be strange to him in our thoughts, but make him the object of our most serious meditations. It is said of the wicked that they are far from God; and that God is not in all their thoughts. Ps. lxxiii. 27. x. 4. The thoughts are the mind's employment. It dwells on that which it frequently thinks of. It is a walk of the mind, and not of the body, which we are treating of. To mind the world, and fleshly things, is contrary to this walk with God: we are far from him, when our thoughts are (ordinarily) far from him. I know that it is lawful and meet to think of the business of our callings, so far as is necessary to the prudent successful management of them; and that it is not requisite that our thoughts be always actually upon God: but he that doth manage his calling in holiness, doth all in obedience to God's commands, and sees that his work be the work of God, and he intendeth all to the glory of God, or the pleasing of his blessed will: and he oft reneweth these actual intentions; and oft interposeth thoughts of the presence, or power,

or love, or interest of him whom he is serving: he often lifteth up his soul in some holy desire or ejaculatory request to God: he oft taketh occasion from what he seeth, or heareth, or is doing, for some more spiritual meditation or discourse: so that still it is God that his mind is principally employed on or for, even in his ordinary work, (while he liveth as a christian.)

And it is not enough to think of God; but we must think of him as God, with such respect, and reverence, and love, and trust, and submission, (in our measure) as is due from the creature to his Creator. For as some kind of speaking of him is but a taking his name in vain; so some kind of thinking of him is but a dishonoring of him, by contemptuous or false unworthy thoughts. Most of our walking with God consisteth in such affectionate apprehensions of him as are suitable to his blessed attributes and relations. All the day long our thoughts should be working either on God, or for God: either upon some work of obedience which he hath imposed on us, and in which we desire to please and honor him, or else directly upon himself. Our hearts must be taken up in contemplating and admiring him, in magnifying his name, his word and works; and in pleasant contentful thoughts of his benignity, and of his glory, and the glory which he conferreth on his saints. He that is unskilful or unable to manage his own thoughts with some activity, seriousness

and order, will be a stranger to much of the holy converse which believers have with God. They that have given up the government of their thoughts, and turned them loose to go which way fantasy pleaseth, and present sensitive objects do invite them, and to run up and down the world as masterless unruly vagrants, can hardly expect to keep them in any constant attendance upon God, or readiness for any sacred work. And the sudden thoughts which they have of God, will be rude, and stupid, savouring more of profane contempt, than of holiness, when they should be reverent, serious, affectionate, and practical, and such as conduce to a holy composure of their hearts and lives.

And as we must walk with God. 1. In our communion with his servants; 2. and in our affectionate meditations; so also, 3. in all the ordinances which he hath appointed for our edification and his worship.

1. The reading of the word of God, and the explication and application of it in good books, is a means to possess the mind with sound, and orderly, and working apprehensions of God, and of his holy truths: so that in such reading our understandings are oft illustrated with a heavenly light, and our hearts are touched with a special delightful relish of that truth, and they are secretly attracted and engaged unto God, and all the powers of our souls are excited and animated to a holy obedient life.

2. The same word preached with a lively voice, with clearness and affection, hath a greater advantage for the same illumination and excitation of the soul. When a minister of Christ that is truly a divine, being filled with the knowledge and love of God, shall copiously and affectionately open to his hearers the excellencies which he hath seen, and the happiness which he hath foreseen and tasted of himself, it frequently (through the co-operation of the Spirit of Christ) doth wrap up the hearers' hearts to God, and bring them into a more lively knowledge of him, actuating their graces, and inflaming their hearts with a heavenly love, and such desires as God hath promised to satisfy. Christ doth not only send his ministers furnished with authority from him, but also furnished with his Spirit, to speak of spiritual things in a spiritual manner; so that in both respects he might say, "He that heareth you heareth me:" and also by the same Spirit doth open and excite the hearts of the hearers: so that it is God himself that a serious christian is principally employed with, in the hearing of his heavenly transforming word: and therefore he is affected with reverence and holy fear, with some taste of heavenly delight, with obediential subjection and resignation of himself to God. The word of God is powerful, not only in pulling down all high exalting thoughts, that rise up against God, but also in lifting up depressed souls, that are unable

to rise unto heavenly knowledge, or communion with God. If some christians could but always find as much of God upon their hearts at other times, as they find sometimes under a spiritual powerful ministry, they would not so complain that they seem forsaken, and strangers to all communion with God, as many of them do. While God (by his messengers and Spirit) is speaking, and man is hearing him; while God is treating with man about his reconciliation and everlasting happiness, and man is seriously attending to the treaty and motions of his Lord, surely this is a very considerable part of our walking and converse with God.

3. Also in the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, we are called to a familiar converse with God. He there appeareth to us by a wonderful condescension, in the representing communicating signs of the flesh and blood of his Son, in which he hath most conspicuously revealed his love and goodness to believers. There Christ himself with his covenant gifts are all delivered to us by these investing signs of his own institution; even as knighthood is given by a sword, and as a house is delivered by a key, or land by a twig and turf. Nowhere is God so near to man as in Jesus Christ: and nowhere is Christ so familiarly represented to us; as in this holy sacrament. Here we are called to sit with him at his table, as his invited welcome guests; to commemorate his sacrifice;

to feed upon his very flesh and blood; that is, with our mouths upon his representative flesh and blood, and with our applying faith upon his real flesh and blood, by such a feeding as belongs to faith. The marriage-covenant betwixt God incarnate, and his espoused ones, is there publicly sealed, celebrated and solemnized. There we are entertained by God as friends, and not as servants only, and that at the most precious costly feast. If ever a believer may on earth expect his kindest entertainment, and near access, and a humble intimacy with his Lord, it is in the participation of this sacrifice-feast, which is called "the communion" because it is appointed as well for our special communion with Christ as with one another. It is here that we have the fullest intimation, expression and communication of the wondrous love of God; and therefore it is here that we have the loudest call, and best assistance to make a large return of love: and where there is the most of this love between God and man, there is most communion, and most of heaven, that can be had on earth.

But it much concerneth the members of Christ, that they deprive not themselves of this communion with God, in this holy sacrament, through their miscarriage; which is too frequently done by one of these extremes.—Either by rushing upon holy things with a presumptuous careless common frame of heart, as if

they knew not that they go to feast with Christ, and discerned not his body: or else by an excess of fear, drawing back, and questioning the good will of God, and thinking diminutively of his love and mercy. By this means Satan depriveth many of the comfortable part of their communion with God, both in this sacrament, and in other ways of grace; and maketh them avoid him as an enemy, and be loth to come into his special presence; and even to be afraid to think of him, to pray to him, or to have any holy converse with him: when the just belief and obervation of his love would stablish them, and revive their souls with joy, and give them experience of the sweet delights which are opened to them in the gospel, and which believers find in the love of God, and the foretaste of the everlasting pleasures.

4. In holy, faithful, fervent prayer, a christian hath very much of his converse with God. For prayer is our approach to God, and calling to mind his presence and his attributes, and exercising all his graces in a holy motion towards him, and an exciting all the powers of our souls to seek him, attend him, and reverently to worship him: it is our treating with him about the most important businesses in all the world: a begging of the greatest mercies, and a deprecating his most grievous judgments; and all this with the nearest familiarity that man in flesh can have with God. In prayer the Spirit

of God is working up our hearts unto him, with desires expressed in sighs and groans: it is a work of God as well as of man: he bloweth the fire, though it be our hearts that burn and boil. In prayer we lay hold on Jesus Christ, and plead his merits and intercession with the Father: he taketh us as it were by the hand, and leadeth us unto God, and hideth our sins, and procureth our acceptance, and presenteth us amiable to his Father, having justified and sanctified us, and cleansed us from those pollutions, which rendered us loathsome and abominable. To speak to God in serious prayer, is a work so high, and of so great moment, that it calleth off our minds from all things else, and giveth no creature room or leave to look into the soul, or once to be observed: the mind is so taken up with God, and employed with him, that creatures are forgotten, and we take no notice of them (unless when through the diversions of the flesh, our prayers are interrupted and corrupted, and so far degenerate, and are no prayer; so far I say as we thus turn away from God.) So that the soul that is most and best at prayer, is most and best at walking with God, and hath most communion with him in the Spirit: and to withdraw from prayer, is to withdraw from God: and to be unwilling to pray, is to be unwilling to draw near to God. Meditation or contemplation is a duty in which God is much enjoyed: but prayer hath medita-

tion in it, and much more. All that is upon the mind in meditation, is upon the mind in prayer, and that with great advantage, as being presented before God, and pleaded with him, and so animated by the apprehensions of his observing presence, and actuated by the desires and pleadings of the soul. When we are commanded to pray, it includeth a command to repent and believe, and fear the Lord, and desire his grace: for faith and repentance, and fear and desire, are altogether in action in a serious prayer; and, as it were, naturally each one takes his place, and there is a holy order in the acting of these graces in a christian's prayers, and a harmony which he doth seldom himself observe. He that in meditation knoweth not how to be regular and methodical, when he is studiously contriving and endeavouring it, yet in prayer before he is aware, hath repentance, and faith, and fear, and desire, and every grace fall in its proper place and order, and contribute its part to the performance of the work. The new nature of a christian is more immediately and vigorously operative in prayer, than in many other duties: and therefore every infant in the family of God can pray (with groaning desires, and ordered graces, if not with well-ordered words.) When Paul began to live to Christ, he began (aright) to pray: Behold he prayeth, saith God to Ananias, Acts ix. 11. And because they are sons, God sends

the Spirit of his Son into the hearts of his elect, even the Spirit of adoption, by which they cry Abba Father, Gal. iv. 6. as children naturally cry to their parents for relief. And nature is more regular in its works than art or human contrivance is. Necessity teacheth many a beggar to pray better for relief to men, than many learned men (that feel not their necessities) can pray to God. The Spirit of God is a better methodist than we are: and though I know that we are bound to use our utmost care and skill for the orderly actuating of each holy affection in our prayers, and not pretend the sufficiency of the Spirit for the patronage of our negligence or sloth (for the Spirit makes use of our understandings for the actuating of our wills and affections;) yet withal it cannot be denied, but that it was upon a special reason that the Spirit that is promised to believers is called a Spirit of grace and supplication; Zech. xii. 10. and that it is given us to help our infirmities, even the infirmities of our understanding, when we know not what to pray for as we ought; Rom. viii. 26. and that the Spirit itself is said to make intercession for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered. It is not the Spirit without that is here meant: such intercession is nowhere ascribed to that. How then is the prayer of the Spirit within us distinguished from our prayer? Not as different effects of different causes—as different prayers by these

different parties: but as the same prayer proceeding from different causes, having a special force (for quality and degree) as from one cause (the Spirit) which it hath not from the other cause (from ourselves) except as received from the Spirit. The Spirit is as a new nature, or fixed inclination in the saints: for their very self-love and will to good is sanctified in them, which works so readily (though voluntarily) as that it is in a sort by the way of nature, though not excluding reason and will; and not as the motion of the brutish appetite. And that God is their felicity, and the only help and comfort of their souls, and so the principal good to be desired by them, is become to them a truth so certain, and beyond all doubt, that their understandings are convinced that *velle bonum*, and *velle Deum*, to love good, and to love God, are words that have almost the same signification; and therefore here is no room for deliberation and choice, where there is *omnimoda ratio boni*, nothing but unquestionable good. A christian (so far as he is such) cannot choose but desire the favor and fruition of God in immortality, even as he cannot choose (because he is a man) but desire his own felicity in general: and as he cannot (as a man) but be unwilling of destruction, and cannot but fear apparent misery, and that which bringeth it; so as a christian he cannot choose but be unwilling of damnation, and of the wrath of God, and of sin as sin, and

fear the apparent dangers of his soul, so that his new nature will presently cast his fear, and repentance, and desires into their proper course and order, and set them on work on their several objects, (about the main unquestionable things, however they may err, or need more deliberation about things doubtful.) The new creature is not as a lifeless engine (as a clock, or watch, or ship) where every part must be set in order by the art and hand of man, and so kept and used; but it is liker to the frame of our own nature, even like man, who is a living engine, when every part is set in its place and order by the creator, and hath in itself a living and harmonical principle, which disposeth it to action, and to regular action, and is so to be kept in order and daily exercise by ourselves, as yet to be principally ordered and actuated by the Spirit which is the principal cause.

By all which you may understand how the Holy Ghost is in us a spirit of supplication, and helpeth our infirmities, and teacheth us to pray, and intercedeth in us; and also that prayer is to the new man, so natural a motion of the soul towards God, that much of our walking with God is exercised in this holy duty: and that it is to the new life, as breathing to our natural life; and therefore no wonder that we are commanded to pray continually, 1 Thes. v. 17. as we must breathe continually; or as nature which needeth a daily supply of food for nourishment,

hath a daily appetite to the food which it needeth, so hath the spiritual nature to its necessary food, and nothing but sickness doth take it off.

And thus I have shewed you how our walking with God containeth a holy use of his appointed means.

II. To walk with God includeth our dependance on him for our receivings, and taking our mercies as from his hand. To live as upon his love and bounty; as children with their father, that can look for nothing but from him. As the eye of a servant, yea, of a craving dog, is upon his master's face and hand, so must our eye be on the Lord, for the gracious supply of all our wants. If men give us any thing, we take them but as the messengers of God, by whom he sendeth it us: we will not be unthankful unto men; but we thank them but for bringing us our Father's gifts: indeed man is so much more than a mere messenger, as that his own charity also is exercised in the gift. A mere messenger is to do no more but obediently to deliver what is sent us, and he need not exercise any charity of his own; and we owe him thanks only for his fidelity and labor, but only to his master for the gift: but God will so far honor man, as that he shall be called also to use his charity, and distribute his master's gifts with some self-denial; and we owe him thanks, as, under God, he partaketh in the charity of the gift; and as one child oweth thanks to another, who both in

obedience to the father, and love to his brother, doth give some part of that which his father had given him before. But still it is from our Father's bounty, as the principal cause, that all proceeds. Thus Jacob speaketh of God, Gen. xlviii. 15. " God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long unto this day, the angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads, &c." When he had mentioned his father Abraham and Isaac's walking with God, he describeth his own by his dependance upon God, and receiving from him, acknowledging him the God that had fed him, and delivered him all his life. Carnal men, that live by sense, do depend upon inferior sensible causes; and though they are taught to pray to God, and thank him with their tongues, it is indeed their own contrivances and industry, or their visible benefactors, which their hearts depend upon and thank. It were a shame to them to be so plain as Pharaoh, and to say, Who is the Lord? or to speak as openly as Nebuchadnezzar, and say, Is not this great Babylon that I have built, by the might of my power? &c. Dan. iv. 30. yet the same atheism and self-idolizing is in their hearts, though it be more modestly and cunningly expressed. Hence it is that they that walk with God, have all their receivings sanctified to them, and have in all a divine and spiritual sweetness, which those that take them but as from creatures, do never feel or understand.

12. Lastly, it is contained in our walking with God, that the greatest business of our lives be with him, and for him. It is not a walk for compliment or recreation only that is here meant; but it is a life of nearness, converse and employment, as a servant or child that dwelleth with his master or father in the house. God should be always so regarded, that man should stand by as nothing, and be scarce observed in comparison of him. We should begin the day with God, and entertain him in the first and sweetest of our thoughts: we should walk abroad and do our work as in his sight: we must resolve to do no work but his, no not in our trades and ordinary callings: we must be able to say, It is the work which my master set me to do, and I do it to obey and please his will. At night we must take an account of ourselves, and spread open that account before him, desiring his acceptance of what was well, and his pardon for what we did amiss, that we may thus be ready for our last account. In a word, though men be our fellow-laborers and companions, yet the principal business of our care and diligence, must be our master's service in the world. And therefore we must look about us, and discern the opportunities of serving him, and of the best improvement of his talents; and must make it our daily study and business, to do him the greatest service we are able, whatever it may cost us through the

malice of the enemies, being sure our labor shall not be in vain, and that we cannot serve him at too dear a rate. It is not as idle companions, but as servants, as soldiers, as those that put forth all their strength, to do his work and reach the crown, that we are called to walk with God. And all this is done, though not in the same degree by all, yet according to the measure of their holiness by every one that lives by faith.

Having told you what it is to walk with God, as to the matter of it, I shall more briefly tell you as to the manner: the nature of God, of man, and of the work, will tell it you.

1. That our walk with God must be with the greatest reverence: were we never so much assured of his special love to us, and never so full of faith and joy, our reverence must be never the less for this. Though love cast out that guilty fear which discourageth the sinner from hoping and seeking for the mercy which would save him, and which disposeth him to hate and fly from God, yet doth it not cast out that reverence of God, which we owe him as his creatures so infinitely below him as we are. It cannot be that God should be known and remembered as God, without some admiring and awful apprehensions of him. Infiniteness, omnipotency and inaccessible majesty and glory, must needs affect the soul that knoweth them, with reverence and self-abasement. Though we

receive a kingdom that cannot be moved, yet if we will serve God acceptably, we must serve him with reverence and godly fear, as knowing that as he is our God, so he is also a consuming fire. Heb. xii. 28, 29. We must so worship him as those that remember that we are worms and guilty sinners, and that he is most high and holy, and will be sanctified in them that come nigh him, and before all the people he will be glorified. Lev. x. 3. Unreverence sheweth a kind of atheistical contempt of God, or else a sleepiness and inconsiderateness of the soul. The sense of the goodness and love of God, must consist with the sense of his holiness and omnipotency. It is presumption, pride or blockish stupidity, which excludeth reverence; which faith doth cause, and not oppose.

2. Our walking with God must be a work of humble boldness and familiarity. The reverence of his holiness and greatness, must not overcome or exclude the sense of his goodness and compassion, nor the full assurance of faith and hope. Though by sin we are enemies and strange to God, and stand afar off, yet in Christ we are reconciled to him and brought near. Eph. ii. 13. For he is our peace, who hath taken down the partition, and abolished the enmity, and reconciled jew and gentile unto God. ver. 14—16. And through him we have all an access to the Father by one Spirit: we are now no more strangers and foreigners,

but fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God: ver. 18, 19. In him we have boldness and access with confidence by the belief of him. Eph. iii. 12. Though of ourselves we are unworthy to be called his children, and may well stand afar off with the publican, and not dare to lift up our faces towards heaven, but smite our breasts and say, "O Lord be merciful to me a sinner." "Yet have we boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh: and having an high priest over the house of God, we may draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith." Heb. x. 19—22. Therefore whensoever we are afraid at the sight of sin and justice, let us remember that "we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, even Jesus the Son of God: and therefore let us come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." Heb. iv. 14, 16. He that alloweth us to walk with him, doth allow us such humble familiarity as beseemeth those that walk together with him.

3. Our walking with God must be a work of some holy pleasure and delight. We may unwillingly be dragged into the presence of an enemy, and serve as drudges upon mere necessity or fear: but walking together is the loving and delightful converse of friends. When we take

sweet counsel of the Lord, and set him always as at our right hand, and are glad to hear from him, and glad to speak to him, and glad to withdraw our thoughts from all the things and persons in the world, that we may solace ourselves in the contemplations of his excellency, and the admirations of his love and glory—this is indeed to walk with God. You converse with him as with a stranger, an enemy, or your destroyer, and not as with God, while you had rather be far from him, and only tremble in his presence, and are glad when you have done and are got away, but have no delight or pleasure in him. If we can take delight in our walking with a friend, a friend that is truly loving and constant, a friend that is learned, wise, and holy; if their wise and heavenly discourse be better to us than our recreations, meat, or drink, or clothes, what delight then should we find in our secret converse with the most high, most wise and gracious God! How glad should we be to find him willing and ready to entertain us! How glad should we be that we may employ our thoughts on so high and excellent an object! What cause have we to say, “My meditation of him shall be sweet, and I will be glad in the Lord!” Ps. civ. 34. “In the multitude of my thoughts within me (my sorrowful, troublesome, weary thoughts) thy comforts do delight my soul.” Ps. xciv. 19. Let others take pleasure in childish vanity, or sensuality, but say thou as David, Ps. cxix.

14—16, “ I have rejoiced in the ways of thy commandments, as much as in all riches : I will meditate in thy precepts and have respect unto thy ways : I will delight myself in thy statutes, and will not forget thy word.” Ver. 47. “ I will delight myself in thy commandments which I have loved.” Let “ scorners delight in scorning, and fools hate knowledge,” Prov. i. 22. but “ make me to go in the path of thy commandments, for therein do I delight.” Ps. cxix. 35. If thou wouldest experimentally know the safety and glory of a holy life, delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desire of thy heart. Ps. xxxvii. 4. Especially when we draw near him in his solemn worship, and when we separate ourselves on his holy days from all our common worldly thoughts to be conversant as in heaven with the blessed God, then may we with the holy apostle be “ in the Spirit on the Lord’s day ;” Rev. i. 10. and if we turn away our foot from the sabbath, from doing our pleasure on that holy day ; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable ; and shall honor him, not doing our own ways, nor finding our own pleasure, nor speaking our own words : then shall we delight ourselves in the Lord, Isa. lviii. 13, 14. and understand how great a privilege it is to have the liberty of those holy days and duties for our sweet and heavenly converse with God.

4. Our walking with God must be a matter

of industry and diligence. It is not an occasional idle converse, but a life of observance, obedience and employment, that this phrase importeth. The sluggish idle wishes of the hypocrite, whose hands refuse to labor, are not this walking with God: nor the sacrifice of fools, who are hasty to utter the overflowings of their fantasy before the Lord, while they keep not their foot, nor hearken to the law, nor consider that they do evil. Eccles. v. 1—3. He that cometh to God (and will walk with him) must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him. God is with you while you are with him; but if you forsake him he will forsake you. 2 Chron. xv. 2. Up and be doing, and the Lord will be with you. 1 Chron. xxii. 16. If you would meet with God in the way of mercy, “Take diligent heed to the commandment and law, to love the Lord your God, and to walk in all his ways, and to cleave unto him, and to serve him with all your heart, and with all your soul.” Josh. xxii. 5.

5. Our walking with God is a matter of some constancy: it signifieth our course and trade of life; and not some accidental action on the by. A man may walk with a stranger, for a visit, or in compliment, or upon some unusual occasion; but this walk with God, is the act of those that dwell with him in his family, and do his work. It is not only to step and speak with him, or cry to him for mercy in some great extremity, or to

go to church for company or custom, or think or talk of him sometime heartlessly on the by, as a man will talk of news, or matters that are done in a foreign land, or of persons that we think we have little to do with; but it is to be always with him. Luke xv. 31. To seek first his kingdom and righteousness. Matt. vi. 33. Not to labor (comparatively) for the food that perisheth, but for that which endureth to everlasting life. John vi. 27. To delight in the law of the Lord, and meditate in it day and night. Ps. i. 2. That his words be in our hearts, and that we teach them diligently to our children, and talk of them sitting in the house, and walking by the way, lying down, and rising up, &c. Deut. vi. 6—8. That we pray continually, 1 Thes. v. 17. and in all things give thanks. But will the hypocrite delight himself in the Almighty, or will he always call upon God? Job xxvii. 10. His goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away. Hos. vi. 4. So much of the description of this walking with God.

CHAPTER II.

Use. WE are next to consider how far this doctrine doth concern ourselves, and what use we have to make of it upon our hearts and lives.

And first it acquainteth us with the abundance of atheism that is in the world, even

among those that profess the knowledge of God. It is atheism not only to say, there is no God: but to say so in the heart. Ps. xiv. 1. While the heart is no more affected towards him, observant of him, or confident in him, or submissive to him, than if indeed there were no God: when there is nothing of God upon the heart, no love, no fear, no trust, no subjection, then is heart atheism. When men that have some kind of knowledge of God, yet glorify him not as God, nor are thankful to him, but become vain in their imaginations, and their foolish hearts are darkened; these men are heart-atheists, and professing themselves wise, they become fools, and are given up to vile affections: and as they do not like to retain God in their knowledge (however they may discourse of him, so) God oft giveth them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things that are not convenient, being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, &c. Rom. i. 21, 22, 26, 28, 29, 30. Swarms of such atheists go up and down under the self-deceiving name of christians: being indeed unbelieving and defiled, so void of purity, that they deride it, and nothing is pure to them; but even their mind and conscience is defiled: they profess that they know God, but they deny him in their works, being abominable and disobedient, and to every good work reprobate, Tit. i.

15, 16. What is he but an atheist, when God is not in all his thoughts, Ps. x. 4. unless he be in their impious or blaspheming thoughts, or in their slight contemptuous thoughts! To take God for God indeed, and for our God, essentially includeth the taking him to be the most powerful, wise and good, the most just and holy, the creator, preserver and governor of the world, whom we and all men are obliged absolutely to obey and fear, to love and desire, whose will is our beginning, rule and end: he that taketh not God for such as here described, taketh him not for God, and therefore is indeed an atheist: what name soever he assumeth to himself, this is the name that God will call him by; even a fool that hath said in his heart there is no God: while they are corrupt and do abominably, they understand not, and seek not after God; they are all gone aside, and are altogether become filthy, there is none of them that doth good; they are workers of iniquity that have no knowledge, and eat up the people of God as bread, and call not upon the Lord. Ps. xiv. 1—4. “Ungodliness” is but the English for “atheism.” The atheist or ungodly in opinion, is he that thinks that there is no God, or that he is one that we need not love and serve (and that he is but the same, viz. to be no God.) The atheist or ungodly in heart or will, is he that consenteth not that God shall be his God, to be loved, feared and obeyed before

all. The atheist in life or outward practice, is he that liveth as without God in the world ; that seeketh him not as his chiefest good, and obeyeth him not as his highest absolute lord ; so that indeed atheism is the sum of all iniquity, as godliness is the sum of all religion and moral good. If you see by the description which I have given you, what it is to be godly, and to walk with God, and what it is to be an atheist or ungodly, you may easily see that godliness is more rare, and atheism more common, than many that themselves are atheists will believe. It is not that which a man calls his God, that is taken by him for his God indeed. It is not the tongue, but the heart that is the man. Pilate called Christ the King of the Jews, when he crucified him. The Jews called God their Father, when Christ telleth them, they were of their father the devil, and proveth it because (whatever they said) they would do his lusts. John viii. 44. The same Jews pretended to honor the name of the Messiah, and expect him, while they killed him. The question is not what men call themselves, but what they are : not whether you say you take God for your God, but whether you do so indeed : not whether you profess yourselves to be atheists, but whether you are atheists indeed or not. If you are not, look over what I have here said, and tell your consciences, Do you walk with God? Who is it that you submit yourselves willingly to be

disposed of by? To whom are you most subject; and whose commands have the most effectual authority with you? Who is the chief governor of your hearts and lives? Whom is it that you principally desire to please; whom do you most fear; and whose displeasure do you principally avoid? From whom is it that you expect your greatest reward; and in whom, and with whom, do you place and expect your happiness? Whose work is it that you do, as the greatest business of your lives? Is it the goodness of God in himself and unto you, that draweth up your hearts to him in love? Is he the ultimate end of the main intentions, design, and industry of your lives? Do you trust upon his word as your security for your everlasting hopes and happiness? Do you study and observe him in his works? Do you really live as in his presence? Do you delight in his word, and meditate on it? Do you love the communion of saints; and to be most frequent and familiar with them that are most frequent and familiar with Christ? Do you favour more the practical affectionate discourse about his nature, will, and kingdom, than the frothy talk of empty wits, or the common discourse of carnal worldlings? Do you love to be employed in thanking him for his mercies, and in praising him, and declaring the glory of his attributes and works? Is your dependence on him as your great benefactor, and do you receive your

mercies as his gifts? If thus your principal observation be of God, and your chief desire after God, and your chiefest confidence in God, and your chiefest business in the world be with God, and for God, and your chiefest joy be in the favor of God, (when you can apprehend it) and in the prosperity of his church, and your hopes of glory; and your chiefest grief and trouble be your sinful distance from him, and your backwardness and disability in his love and service, and the fear of his displeasure, and the injuries done to his gospel and honor in the world; then I must needs say, you are savingly delivered from your atheism and ungodliness; you do not only talk of God, but walk with God; you are then acquainted with that spiritual life and work, which the sensual world is unacquainted with, and with those invisible everlasting excellencies, which if worldlings knew, they would change their minds, and choice, and pleasures: you are then acquainted with that rational, manly, saintly life, which ungodly men are strangers to; and you are in the way of that well-grounded hope and peace to which all the pleasures and crowns on earth, if compared, are but cheats and misery. But if you were never yet brought to walk with God, do not think that you have a sound belief in God, nor that you acknowledge him sincerely, nor that you are saved from heart atheism: nor is it piety in the opinion and the tongue, that will

save him that is an atheist or ungodly in heart and life. Divinity is an affective-practical science: knowing is not the ultimate or perfective act of man; but a means to holy love, and joy, and service. Nor is it clear and solid knowledge, if it do not somewhat affect the heart, and engage and actuate the life, according to the nature and use of the thing known. The soundness of knowledge and belief is not best discerned in the intellectual acts themselves, but in their powerful, free, and pleasant efficacy upon our choice and practice. By these therefore you must judge, whether you are godly or atheistical. The question is not what your tongues say of God, nor what complimentary ceremonious observances you allow him, but what your hearts and your endeavours say of him, and whether you glorify him as God when you say you know him: otherwise you will find that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who held the truth in unrighteousness. Rom. i. 18, 21.

And now, alas! what matter of lamentation is here before us! To see how seriously men converse with one another; and how God is overlooked or neglected by the most! how men live together, as if there were more that is considerable and regardable in these particles of animated dust, than in the Lord Almighty, and in all his graces, service and rewards! To see

how God is cast aside, and his interest made to give place to the interest of the flesh; and his services must stay till men have done their service to their lusts, or to worldly men, that can do them hurt or shew them favor! and his will must not be done when it crosseth the will of sinful man! How little do all the commands, and promises, and threatenings of God signify with these atheistical men, in comparison of their lusts, or the laws of men, or any thing that concerneth their temporal prosperity! O how is the world revolted from their Maker! how have they lost the knowledge of themselves, and forgotten their natures, capacities and obligations, and what it is to be indeed a man! O hearken sinners to the call of your Redeemer! Return, O seduced wandering souls, and know at last your resting place! Why is not God in all your thoughts?—Or why is he thought on with so much remissness, unwillingness, and contempt; and with so little pleasure, seriousness, or regard? Do you understand yourselves in this? Do you deal worthily with God; or wisely for yourselves? Do you take more pleasure, with the prodigal, to feed swine, and to feed with swine, than to dwell at home with your heavenly Father; and to walk before him, and serve him in the world? Did you but know how dangerous a way you have been in, and how unreasonably you have dealt, to forsake God in your hearts, and follow that which cannot profit you; what

haste would you make to leave the crowd, and come home to God, and try a more noble and gainful conversation! If reasons may have room and leave to work upon you, I will set a few before you more distinctly, to call you off from your barren inordinate creature converse, to a believing serious converse with God.

1. The higher and more excellent the object is (especially when it is also of most concernment to ourselves) the more excellent is the converse. Therefore as nothing dare compare itself with God, so no employment may be compared with this of holy walking with him. How vile a contempt is it of the Almighty, and of our celestial joys, for the heart to neglect them, and turn away and dwell upon vanity and trouble, and let these highest pleasures go! Is not God and glory worthy of thy thoughts and all thy service?

2. What are those things that take thee up? Are they better than God; or fitter to supply thy wants? If thou think and trust in them accordingly, ere long thou shalt know better what they are, and have enough of thy cursed choice and confidence. Tell those that stand by thee at the parting hour, whether thou didst choose aright, and make a gaining or a saving match. O poor sinners! have you not yet warning enough to satisfy you that all things below are vanity and vexation, and that all your hope of happiness is above? Will not the

testimony of God satisfy you? Will not the experience of the world for so many thousand years together satisfy you? Will not the ill success of all the damned satisfy you? Will nothing but your own experience convince you? If so, consider well the experience you have already made, and seasonably retire, and try no further, and trust not so dangerous a deceiver to the last, lest you buy your knowledge at a dearer rate than you will now believe.

3. You have daily more to do with God, than with all the world, whether you will or no: and therefore seeing you cannot avoid him if you would, prefer that voluntary obediencial converse which hath a reward, before that necessitated converse which hath none. You are always in his hands: he made you for his service; and he will dispose of you and all that you have according to his will. It shall not go with you as yourselves would have it, nor as your friends would have it, nor as princes and great ones of the world would have it; (unless as their wills comply with God's;) but as God would have it, who will infallibly accomplish all his will. If a sparrow fall not to the ground without him, and all the hairs of our heads are numbered, then certainly he overruleth all your interests and affairs, and they are absolutely at his dispose. To whom then in reason should you so much apply yourselves as unto him? If you will not take notice of him, he will take

notice of you: he will remember you whether you remember him or not: but it may be with so strict and severe a remembrance, as may make you wish he did quite forget you. You are always in his presence; and can you then forget him, and hold no voluntary converse with him, when you stand before him? If it be but mean inferior persons that we dwell with and are still in company with, yet we mind them more, and speak more to them, than we do to greater persons that we seldom see. But in God there is both greatness and nearness to invite you. Should not all the worms on earth stand by, while the glorious God doth call you to him, and offer you the honor and happiness of his converse? Shall the Lord of heaven and earth stand by, and be shut out, while you are chatting or trifling with his creatures? Nay, shall he be neglected that is always with you? You cannot remove yourselves a moment from his sight; and therefore you should not shut your eyes, and turn away your face, and refuse to observe him who is still observing you.

Moreover, your dependance both for soul and body is all on him: you can have nothing desirable but by his gift. He feeds you, he clotheth you, he maintaineth you, he gives you life and breath, and all things; and yet can you overlook him or forget him? Do not all his mercies require your acknowledgment? A dog will follow him that feedeth him: his eye will

be upon his master: and shall we live upon God, and yet forget and disregard him? We are taught a better use of his mercies by the holy prophet, Ps. lxxvi. 8, 9. "O bless our God, ye people, and make the voice of his praise to be heard: which holdeth our soul in life, and suffereth not our feet to be moved!"

Nay it is not yourselves alone, but all the world that depends on God. It is his power that supporteth them, and his will that disposeth of them, and his bounty that provideth for them; and therefore he must be the observation and admiration of the world: it is less unreasonable to take no notice of the earth that beareth us and yieldeth us fruit, and of the sun that yields us heat and light, than to disregard the Lord that is more to us than sun and earth, and all things. The eyes of all things wait on him; and he giveth them their meat in season: he openeth his hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing. Ps. cxlv. 15, 16. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works: all his works therefore shall praise him, and his saints shall bless him: they shall speak of the glory of his kingdom, and talk of his power. Ver. 10, 11.

Moreover, God is so abundantly and wonderfully represented to us in all his works, as will leave us under the guilt of most unexcusable contempt, if we overlook him, and live as without him in the world. "The heavens declare the

glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handy work: day unto day uttereth speech; and night unto night sheweth knowledge." Ps. xix. 1, 2. Thus that which may be known of God is manifest; for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that the ungodly are without excuse. Rom. i. 19, 20. Cannot you see that which all the world revealeth? nor hear that which all the world proclaimeth? O sing ye forth the honor of his name: make his praise glorious! Say to the Lord, How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee: all the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee: they shall sing unto thy name: come and see the works of God: he is terrible in his doings towards the children of men. Ps. lxxvi. 2—5. Can we pass him by that is every where present, and by every creature represented to us? Can we forget him, when all the world are our remembrancers? Can we stop our ears against the voice of heaven and earth? Can we be ignorant of him, when the whole creation is our teacher? Can we overlook that holy glorious name, which is written so legibly upon all things that ever our eyes beheld that nothing but blindness, sleepiness or distraction, could possibly keep us from discerning it? I have many a

time wondered, that (as the eye is dazzled so with the beholding of the greatest light, that it can scarce perceive the shining of a lesser so) the glorious transcendent majesty of the Lord, doth not even overwhelm our understandings, and so transport and take us up, as that we can scarce observe or remember any thing else. For naturally the greatest objects of our sense, are apt to make us at that time insensible of the smaller: and our exceeding great business, is apt to make us utterly neglect and forget those that are exceeding small: and O what nothings are the best and greatest of the creatures, in comparison of God! And what toys and trifles are all our other businesses in the world, in comparison of the business which we have with him! But I have been stopped in these admirations by considering that the wise creator hath fitted and ordered all his creatures according to the use which he designeth them to: and therefore as the eye must be receptive only of so much light as is proportioned to its use and pleasure, and must be so distant from the sun, that its light may rather guide than blind us, and its heat may rather quicken than consume us; so God hath made our understandings capable of no other knowledge of him here, than what is suited to the work of holiness: and while we have flesh, and fleshly works to do, and lawful necessary business in the world, in which God's own commands employ us, our

souls in this lantern of the body, must see him through so thick a glass, as shall so far allay our apprehension, as not to distract us and take us off the works which he enjoineth us. And God and our souls shall be at such a distance, as that the proportionable light of his countenance may conduct us, and not overwhelm us; and his love may be so revealed, as to quicken our desires, and draw us on to a better state, but not so as to make us utterly impatient of this world, and utterly weary of our lives, or to swallow us up, or possess us of our most desired happiness, before we arrive at the state of happiness. While the soul is in the body, it maketh so much use of the body (the brain and spirits) in all its operations, that our wise and merciful creator and governor, doth respect the body as well as the soul, in his ordering, disposing, and representing of the objects of those operations: so that when I consider that certainly all men would be distracted, if their apprehensions of God were any whit answerable to the greatness of his majesty and glory (the brain being not able to bear such high operations of the soul, nor the greatness of the passions which would necessarily follow) it much reconcileth my wondering mind, to the wise and gracious providence of God, even in setting innocent nature itself at such a distance from his glory, (allowing us the presence of such grace, as is necessary to bring us up to glory);

Though it reconcile me not to that doleful distance which is introduced by sin, and which is furthered by Satan, the world, and the flesh, and which our Redeemer by his Spirit and intercession must heal.

And it further reconcileth me to this disposure and will of the blessed God, and this necessary natural distance and darkness of our minds, when I consider, that if God, and heaven, and hell, were as near and open to our apprehensions, as the things are which we see and feel, this life would not be what God intended it to be—a life of trial and preparation to another, a work, a race, a pilgrimage, a warfare; what trial would there be of any man's faith, or love, or obedience, or constancy, or self-denial? If we saw God stand by, or apprehended him as if we saw him (in degree) it would be no more praiseworthy or rewardable for a man to abhor all temptations to worldliness, ambition, gluttony, drunkenness, lust, cruelty, &c. than it is for a man to be kept from sleeping that is pierced with thorns, or for a man to forbear to drink a cup of melted gold which he knoweth will burn out his bowels, or to forbear to burn his flesh in the fire. It were no great commendation to his chastity, that would forbear his filthiness, if he saw or had the fullest apprehensions of God; when he will forbear it in the presence of a mortal man. It were no great commendations to the intemperate and voluptuous, to have no

mind of sensual delights, if they had but such a knowledge of God as were equal to sight. It were no thanks to the persecutor to forbear his cruelty against the servants of the Lord, if he saw Christ coming with his glorious angels, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel, and to be admired in his saints, and glorified in them that now believe. 2 Thes. i. 7—10. I deny not but this happily necessitated holiness is best in itself, and therefore will be our state in heaven; but what is there of trial in it? or how can it be suitable to the state of man, that must have good and evil set before him, and life and death left to his choice; and that must conquer if he will be crowned, and approve his fidelity to his creator against competitors, and must live a rewardable life before he have the reward?

But though in this life we may neither hope for, nor desire, such overwhelming sensible apprehensions of God, as the rest of our faculties cannot answer, nor our bodies bear; yet that our apprehensions of him should be so base, and small, and dull, and inconstant, as to be borne down by the noise of worldly business, or by the presence of any creature, or by the tempting baits of sensuality,—this is the more odious, by how much God is more great and glorious than the creature, and even because the use of the creature itself is but to reveal the glory of the Lord. To have such slight and

stupid thoughts of him, as will not carry us on in uprightness of obedience, nor keep us in his fear, nor draw out our hearts in sincere desires to please him, and enjoy him, and as will not raise us to a contempt of the pleasures, and profits, and honors of this world,—this is to be despisers of the Lord, and to live as in a sleep, and to be dead to God, and alive only to the world and flesh. It is no unjust dishonor or injury to the creature, to be accounted as nothing in comparison of God, that it may be able to do nothing against him and his interest: but to make such a nothing of the most glorious God, by our contemptuous forgetfulness or neglect, as that our apprehensions of him cannot prevail against the sordid pleasures of the flesh, and against the richest baits of sin, and against all the wrath or allurements of man,—this is but to make a God of dust, and dung, and nothing, and (in heart and practice) to make God worse than dust and dung. And it is a wonder that man's understanding can become so sottish, as thus to wink the sun itself into a constant darkness, and to take God as nothing, or as no God, who is so abundantly revealed to them in astonishing transcendent greatness and excellency, by all the creatures in the world, and with whom we have continually so much to do. O sinful man! into how great a depth of ignorance, stupidity and misery art thou fallen!

But because we may see by the lives of the

ungodly, that they little think that they have so much to do with God, though I have spoke of this to the godly in the other part of this treatise, I shall somewhat more particularly acquaint those that have most need to be informed of it—what business it is that they have with God.

1. It is not a business that may be done, or left undone, like your business with men: but it is such as must be done, or you are undone for ever. Nothing is absolutely necessary but this: nothing in all the world doth so much concern you. You may at far cheaper rates forbear to eat, or drink, or clothe yourselves, or live, than forbear the dispatch of this necessary work.

2. Your business with God, and for God in the world, is that which you have all your powers and endowments for: it is that which you were born into the world for; and that which you have understanding and free will for; and that which you have your thoughts, and memories, and affections for; and that which you have eyes, and ears, and tongues, and all your corporeal parts and abilities for: it is that which you have your food and raiment for; and that which you have your time for; and your preservation, protection and provisions: it is that which you have all your teaching for; which Christ himself came for into the world; which the scriptures are written for; which ministers are sent for; which all order and government

in church and state is principally appointed for : in a word, it is that for which you have your lives, and all things, and without which all were as nothing, and will be to you worse than nothing, if they do not further your work with God : you will wish you had never seen them if they befriend you not in this.

3. Your business with God, and for him, is such as you must be continually doing : as is incumbent on you every hour, for you have every hour given you for this end. You may dispatch this man to-day, and another to-morrow, and have no more to do with them again of a long time ; but you have always incessantly important works to do with God : for your common work should be all his work ; and all should be done with principal respect to him.

But I shall yet more particularly tell the ungodly what business it is that they have with God, which it seems by their careless negligent lives they are not aware of.

1. You must be either saved or damned by him ; either glorified with him, or punished by him to everlasting : and it is now that the matter must be determined, which of the two conditions you must be in : you must now obtain your title to heaven, if ever you will come thither : you must now procure your deliverance from hell fire, if ever you will escape it. Now it is that all that must be done, upon which the scales must turn for your salvation

or damnation : and you know this work is principally to be done between you and God, who alone can save you or destroy you ; and yet do you forget him, and live as if you had no business with him, when you have your salvation to obtain from him, and your damnation to prevent ! Have you such business as this with any other ?

2. You have a strict and righteous judgment to undergo, in order to this salvation or damnation. You must stand before the holy majesty, and be judged by the governor of the world : you must be there accused, and found guilty or not guilty ; and judged as fulfillers or as breakers of the holy covenant of grace : you must be set on the right hand or on the left : you must answer for all the time that you here spent, and for all the means and mercies which you here received, and for that you have done, whether it were good or evil : and it is now in this life that all your preparation must be made, and all that must be done, upon which your justification or condemnation will then depend. And it is between God and you that all this business must be done : and yet can you live as negligently towards him, as if you had no business with him ?

3. You have a death to die, a change to make which must be made but once ; which will be the entrance upon endless joy or pain : and do you think this needeth not your most

timely and diligent preparation? You must struggle with pains, and faint with weakness, and feel death taking down your earthen tabernacle: you must then have a life that is ending to review, and all that you have done laid open to your more impartial judgment; you must then see time as at an end, and the last sand running, and your candle ready to go out, and leave the snuff; you must then look back upon all that you have had from the world, as ending; and upon all that you have done as that which cannot be undone again, that you may do it better; and you must have a more serious look into eternity, when you are stepping thither, than you can now conceive of; and doth all this need no preparation? It is with God that all business must be now transacted, that must make your death to be comfortable, or safe. If now you will only converse with men, and know no business that you have with God, you shall find at last to your exceeding terror, that you are in his hands, and passing to his bar, and that it is God that then you have to do with, when your business with all the world is at an end: he will then have something to do with you, if you will now find nothing to do with him.

4. In order to all this, you have now your peace to be made with God, and the pardon of all your sins to be obtained. For woe to you if then you are found under the guilt of any sin!

Look back upon your lives, and remember how you have lived in the world, and what you have been doing: how you have spent your time, in youth and in your riper age; and how many sinful thoughts, and words, and deeds you have been guilty of; how oft you have sinfully pleased your appetites, and gratified your flesh, and yielded to temptations, and abused mercy, and lost your time: how oft you have neglected your duty, and betrayed your souls: how long you have lived in forgetfulness of God and your salvation, minding only the things of the flesh and of the world: how oft you have sinned ignorantly and against knowledge, through carelessness and through rashness, through negligence and through presumption, in passion, and upon deliberation; against convictions, purposes and promises: how oft you have sinned against the precepts of piety to God, and of justice and charity to men. Think how your sins are multiplied and aggravated, more in number than the hours of your lives: aggravated by a world of mercies: by the clearest teachings, and the loudest calls, and sharpest reproofs, and seasonable warnings, and by the long and urgent importunities of grace. Think of all these, and then consider whether you have nothing now to do with God; whether it be not a business to be followed with all possible speed and diligence to procure the pardon of all these sins: you have no such businesses as these, to

transact with men: you may have business with them which your estates depend upon, or which touch your credit, commodity or lives; but you have no business with men (unless in subordination to God) which your salvation doth depend upon: your eternal happiness is not in their hands: they may kill your bodies, (if God permit them) but not your souls. You need not solicit them to pardon your sins against God: it is a small matter how you are judged of by man: you have one that judgeth you, even the Lord. 1 Cor. iv. 3, 4. No man can forgive sin, but God only. O then how early, how earnestly should you cry to him for mercy! Pardon must be obtained now or never: there is no justification for that man at the day of judgment, that is not forgiven and justified now. Blessed then is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered, and to whom it is not imputed by the Lord. Rom. iv. 7, 8. And woe to that man that ever he was born, that is then found without the pardon of his sins! Think of this as the case deserves, and then think if you can, that your daily business with God is small.

5. Moreover, you have peace of conscience to obtain; and that dependeth upon your peace with God. Conscience will be your accuser, condemner and tormenter, if you make it not your friend, by making God your friend. Consider what conscience hath to say against you,

and how certainly it will speak home, when you would be loth to hear it : and bethink you how to answer all its accusations, and what will be necessary to make it a messenger of peace ; and then think your business with God to be but small, if you are able. It is no easy matter to get assurance that God is reconciled to you, and that he hath forgiven all your sins.

6. In order to all this, you must be united to Jesus Christ, and be made his members, that you may have part in him, and that he may wash you by his blood, and that he may answer for you to his Father ! Woe to you if he be not your righteousness, and if you have not him to plead your cause, and take upon him your final justification ! None else can save you from the wrath of God : and he is the Saviour only of his body. Eph. v. 23. He hath died for you without your own consent, and he hath made an universal conditional grant of pardon and salvation, before you consented to it : but he will not be united to you, nor actually forgive and justify and save you without your own consent : and therefore that the Father may draw you to the Son, and may give you Christ and life in him (1 John v. 9—11.) when all your hope dependeth on it, you may see that you have more to do with God, than your senseless hearts have hitherto understood.

7. And that you may have a saving interest in Jesus Christ, you must have sound repen-

tance for all your former life of wickedness, and a lively effectual faith in Christ: neither sin nor Christ must be made light of. Repentance must tell you to the very heart, that you have done foolishly in sinning, and that it is an evil and a bitter thing that you forsook the Lord, and that his fear was not in you: and thus your wickedness shall correct you and reprove you. Jer. ii. 19. And faith must tell you that Christ is more necessary to you than food or life, and that there is no other name given under heaven by which you can be saved. Acts iv. 12. And it is not so easy, nor so common a thing to repent and believe as ignorant presumptuous sinners do imagine. It is a greater matter to have a truly humbled contrite heart, and to loath yourselves for all your sins, and to loath those sins, and resolvedly give up yourselves to Christ and to his Spirit for a holy life, than heartlessly and hypocritically to say, I am sorry, or I repent, without any true contrition or renovation. And it is a greater matter to betake yourselves to Jesus Christ as your only hope to save you both from sin and from damnation, than barely through custom and the benefit of education to say, I do believe in Christ. I tell you it is so great a work to bring you to sound repentance and faith, that it must be done by the power of God himself. Acts v. 31. 2 Tim. ii. 25. They are the gift of God. Eph. ii. 8. You must have his Spirit to illuminate you, Eph. i. 18. and

shew you the odiousness of sin, the intolerableness of the wrath of God, the necessity and sufficiency, the power and willingness of Christ; and to overcome all your prejudice, and save you from your false opinions and deceits; and to repulse the temptations of Satan, the world and the flesh which will all rise up against you. All this must be done to bring you home to Jesus Christ, or else you will have no part in him, his righteousness and grace: and can you think that you have not most important business with God, who must do all this upon you, or else you are undone for ever?

8. Moreover, you must have all the corruptions of your natures healed, and your sins subdued, and your hearts made new by sanctifying grace, and the image of God implanted in you, and your lives made holy and sincerely conformable to the will of God. All this must be done, or you cannot be acceptable to God, nor ever will be saved: though your carnal interest rise against it; though your old corrupted natures be against it; though your custom, and pleasure, and worldly gain and honor be against it; though all your carnal friends and superiors be against it; though the devil will do all that he can against it; yet all this must be done, or you are lost for ever: and all this must be done by the Spirit of God; for it is his work to make you new and holy: and can you think then that the business is not great which

you have with God? When you have tried how hard every part of this work is, to be begun and carried on, you will find you have more to do with God, than with all the world.

9. Moreover, in order to this, it is necessary that you read, and hear, and understand the gospel, which must be the means of bringing you to God by Christ: this must be the instrument of God, by which he will bring you to repent and believe, and by which he will renew your natures, and imprint his image on you, and bring you to love him, and obey his will. The word of God must be your counsellor, and your delight, and you must set your heart to it, and meditate in it day and night. Knowledge must be the means to reclaim your perverse misguided wills, and to reform your careless crooked lives, and to bring you out of the kingdom of darkness into the state of light and life. And such knowledge cannot be expected without a diligent attending unto Christ, the teacher of your souls, and a due consideration of the truth. By that time you have learnt what is needful to be learnt for a true conversion, a sound repentance, a saving faith, and a holy life, you will find that you have far greater business with God than with all the world.

10. Moreover, for the attaining of all this mercy, you have many a prayer to put up to God: you must daily pray for the forgiveness of your sins, and deliverance from temptations,

and even for your daily bread, or necessary provisions for the work which you have to do : you must daily pray for all the supplies of grace which you want, and for the gradual mortification of the flesh, and for help in all the duties which you must perform ; and for strength against all the spiritual enemies which will assault you ; and preservation from the manifest evils which attend you : and these prayers must be put up with unwearied constancy, fervency and faith. Keep up this course of fervent prayer, and beg for Christ, and grace, and pardon, and salvation in any measure as they deserve, and according to thy own necessity ; and then tell me whether thy business with God be small, and to be put off as lightly as it is by the ungodly.

11. Moreover, you are made for the glory of your Creator, and must apply yourselves wholly to glorify him in the world : you must make his service the trade and business of your lives, and not put him off with something on the by : you are good for nothing else but to serve him ; as a knife is made to cut, and as your clothes are made to cover you, and your meat to feed you, and your horse to labor for you, so you are made and redeemed, and maintained for this—to love and please your great Creator : and can you think that it is but little business that you have with him, when he is the end and master of your lives, and all you are or have is for him ?

12. And for the due performance of his service, you have all his talents to employ. To this end it is that he hath entrusted you with reason, and health, and strength, with time, and parts, and interest, and wealth, and all his mercies, and all his ordinances and means of grace; and to this end must you use them, or you lose them: and you must give him an account of all at last, whether you have improved them all to your master's use. And can you look within you, without you, about you, and see how much you are trusted with, and must be accountable to him for, and yet not see how great your business is with God?

13. Moreover, you have all the graces which you shall receive to exercise; and every grace doth carry you to God, and is exercised upon him, or for him: it is God that you must study, and know, and love, and desire, and trust, and hope in, and obey: it is God that you must seek after, and delight in so far as you enjoy him: it is his absence or displeasure that must be your fear and sorrow: therefore the soul is said to be sanctified when it is renewed, because it is both disposed and devoted unto God. And therefore grace is called holiness, because it all disposeth, and carrieth the soul to God, and useth it upon and for him. And can you think your business with God is small, when you must live upon him, and all the powers of your soul must be addicted to him, and be in serious

motion towards him; and when he must be much more to you than the air which you breathe in, or the earth you live upon, or than the sun that gives you light and heat; yea, than the soul is to your bodies?

14. Lastly, you have abundance of temptations and impediments to watch and strive against, which would hinder you in the doing of all this work, and a corrupt and treacherous heart to watch and keep in order, which will be looking back, and shrinking from the service. Lay all this together, and then consider whether you have not more and greater business with God, than with all the creatures in the world.

And if this be so (as undeniably it is so) is there any cloak for that man's sin, who is all day taken up with creatures, and thinks of God as seldom and as carelessly as if he had no business with him? And yet, alas, if you take a survey of high and low, of court, and city, and country, you shall find that this is the case of no small number, yea, of many that observe it not to be their case; it is the case of the profane that pray in jest, and swear, and curse, and rail in earnest. It is the case of the malignant enemies of holiness, that hate them at the heart that are most acquainted with this converse with God, and count it but hopocrisy, pride or fancy, and would not suffer them to live upon the earth, who are most sincerely conversant in heaven. It is the case of phari-

sees and hypocrites, who take up with ceremonious observances, as touch not, taste not, handle not, and such like traditions of their forefathers, instead of a spiritual rational service, and a holy serious walking with the Lord. It is the case of all ambitious men, and covetous worldlings, who make more ado to climb up a little higher than their brethren, and to hold the reins, and have their wills, and be admired and adored in the world, or to get a large estate for themselves and their posterity, than to please their maker, or to save their souls: it is the case of every sensual epicure, whose belly is his god, and serveth his fancy, lust and appetite, before the Lord. It is the case of every unsanctified man, that seeketh first the prosperity of his flesh, before the kingdom and righteousness of God, and is most careful and laborious to lay up a treasure on earth, and laboreth more (with the greater estimation, resolution and delight) for the meat that perisheth, than for that which endureth to everlasting life. All these (who are too great a part of the world, and too great a part of professed christians) are taken up with creature converse; and yet think to scape the deluge of God's displeasure, because the Enochs and Noahs are so few who walk with God; and they think God will not destroy so many: and thus they think to be saved by their multitude, and to hide themselves in the crowd from God. they

will go the wide and common path, and be of the mind that most are of: they will not be convinced till most men are convinced; that is, till their wisdom come too late, and cost them dearer than its worth. When all men are convinced that God should have been preferred before the world, and served before their fleshly lusts (as they will certainly and sadly be) then they will be convinced with the rest. When all men understand that life was given them to have done the work which eternal life dependeth on, then they will understand it with the rest. When all men shall discern between the righteous and the wicked; between those that serve God, and that serve him not, then they will discern it with the rest: they will know what their business was in the world, and how much they had to do with God, when all men know it. But O how much better for them had it been to have known it in time, while knowledge might have done them better service, than to make them feel the greatness of their sin and folly, and the hopes which once they had of happiness, and to help the sting of desperation continually to prick them at the heart. They would not be of so little a flock as that to which it was the good pleasure of God to give the kingdom. Luke xii. 32. If you demand a reason of all this, their reason was in their throats and bellies: they had fleshly appetites and lusts, and thereby could relish fleshly pleasures; but spiritual life

and appetite they had none, and therefore relished not spiritual things: had Christ, and holiness, and heaven, been as suitable to their appetites, as the sweetness of their meat, and drink, and lusts, and as suitable to their fantasies as their worldly dignities and greatness were, they would then have made a better choice. They would have walked with God, if drunkenness, and gluttony, and pride, and wantonness, and covetousness, and idleness, had been the way in which they might have walked with him. If these had been godliness, how godly would they have been! How certainly would they have come to heaven, if this had been the way! To be idle, and proud, and fleshly, and worldly, is it that they love; and to be humble, and holy, and heavenly, and mortified, is that which they hate, and cannot away with: and their love and hatred proceed from their corrupted natures; and these are instead of reason to them. Their strong apprehensions of a present suitableness in fleshly pleasures to their appetites, and of a present unsuitableness of a holy life, do keep out all effectual apprehensions of the excellencies of God, and of spiritual heavenly delights, which cross them in the pleasures which they most desire.

But yet (their appetites corrupting their understandings as well as their wills) they will not be mad without some reason, nor reject their

maker and their happiness without some reason, nor neglect that holy work which they were made for without some reason: let us hear then what it is.

CHAPTER III.

Object. 1. They say “ It is true that God hath much to do with us, and for us: but it followeth not that we have so much to do with him, or for him, as you would have us to believe: for he is necessarily good, and necessarily doth good; and therefore will do so, whether we think of him or not: the sun will not give over shining on me, though I never think on it, or never pray to it, or give it thanks. Nor doth God need any service that we can do him, no more than the sun doth: nor is he pleased any more in the praise of men, or in their works.”

Answ. 1. It is most certain that God is good as necessarily as he is God: but it is not true that he must necessarily do good to you, or other individual persons; nor that he necessarily doth the good he doth to them. As he is not necessitated to make toads and serpents as happy as men, or men as angels; so he is not necessitated to save the devils or damned

souls (for he will not save them.) And he was under no greater a necessity to save you, than them. He was not necessitated to give you a being: he could have passed you by, and caused others to have possessed your room. As it was God's free will and not any necessity that millions more are never born, that were in possibility of it; (for all that is possible doth not come to pass) so that you and millions more were born, was not of necessity but of the same free will. And as God did not make you of necessity but of free will; so he doth not necessarily but freely justify, or sanctify, or save. If he did it by necessity of nature, he would do it to all as well as some; seeing all have a natural capacity of grace as well as those that receive it. God is able to sanctify and save more, yea all, if it were his will; and it is not for want of power or goodness that he doth not. Millions of beings are possible which are not future. God doth not all the good which he is able, but communicateth so much to his several creatures as to his wisdom seemeth meet. If the damned would be so presumptuous as to argue, that because God is able yet to sanctify and save them, therefore he must do it of necessity of nature, it would not be long before they should thus dispute themselves out of their torments. God will not ask leave of sinners to be God: their denying him to be good (that is, to be God) because he complieth not with their con-

ceits and wills, doth but prove them to be fools, and bad themselves.

Indeed some sciolists, pretending to learning, while they are ignorant of most obvious principles of natural knowledge, have taught poor sinners to cheat their souls with such dreams as these. They have made themselves believe that goodness in God is nothing else but his benignity, or disposition to do good; as if the creature were the ultimate end, and all God's goodness but a means thereto; and so God were the Alpha or first efficient, and yet the creature the Omega or *finis ultimus*; and all the goodness in God were to be estimated and denominated by its respect to the felicity of man: and so the creature hath the best part of the deity. Such notions evidently shew us, that lapsed man is predominantly selfish, and is become his own idol, and is lost in himself, while he hath lost himself by his loss of God, when we see how powerful his self-interest is, both with his intellect and will. Even men of great ingenuity, till sanctification hath restored them to God, and taught them better to know him and themselves, are ready to measure all good or evil by their own interest; when yet common reason would have told them, if they had not perverted it by pride and partial studies, that short of God, even among the creatures, there are many things to be preferred before themselves and their own felicity. He is irrationally enslaved by

self-love, that cannot see that the happiness of the world, or of his country, or of multitudes, is more to be desired than his happiness alone; and that he ought rather to choose to be annihilated or to be miserable (if it were made a matter of his deliberation and choice) than to have the sun taken out of the firmament, or the world, or his country to be annihilated or miserable. And God is infinitely above the creature.

Object. But they say, he needeth nothing to make him happy, having no defect of happiness.

Ans. And what of that? Must it needs therefore follow that he made not all things for himself, but for the creature finally? He is perfectly happy in himself, and his will is himself: this will was fulfilled when the world was not made (for it was his will that it should not be made till it was made) and it is fulfilled when it is made, and fulfilled by all that comes to pass: and as the absolute simple goodness and perfection of God's essence is the greatest good, the eternal immutable good; so the fulfilling of his will is the ultimate end of all obedience. He hath expressed himself to take pleasure in his works, and in the holiness, obedience and happiness of his chosen; and, though pleasure be not the same thing in God as it is in man (no more than will or understanding is) yet it is not nothing which God expresseth by such terms, but something which we have no fitter expression for. This pleasing of the will of God

being the end of all, even of our felicity, is better than our felicity itself.

They that will maintain that God, who is naturally and necessarily good, hath no other goodness but his benignity or aptness to do good to his creatures, must needs also maintain that (God being for the creature, and not the creature for God) the creature is better than God, as being the ultimate end of God himself; and the highest use of all his goodness being but for the felicity of the creature: as also that God doth do all the good that he is able (for natural necessary agents work *ad ultimum posse*): and that all men shall be saved, and all devils, and every worm and toad be equal to the highest angel; or else that God is not able to do it: and that he did thus make happy all his creatures from eternity (for natural necessary agents work always, if they be not forcibly hindered;); and that there never was such a thing as pain or misery, in man or brute; or else that God was not able to prevent it. But abundance of such odious consequences must needs follow from the denying of the highest good, which is God himself, and confessing none but his efficient goodness. But some will be offended with me for being so serious in confuting such an irrational atheistical conceit, who know not how far it prevaieth with an atheistical generation.

Be it known to you, careless sinners, that though the sun will shine on you whether you

think on it or not, or love it, or thank it or not; and the fire will warm you whether you think on it and love it or not; yet God will not justify or save you whether you love him or think on him or not. God doth not operate brutishly in your salvation, but governeth you wisely, as rational creatures are to be governed; and therefore will give you happiness as a reward: and therefore will not deal alike with those that love him and that love him not, that seek him and that seek him not, with the laborers and the loiterers, the faithful and the slothful servant. Would you have us believe that you know better than God himself what pleaseth him, or on what terms he will give his benefits, and save men's souls? or do you know his nature better than he knoweth it, that you dare presume to say—Because he needeth not our love or duty, therefore they are not pleasing to him? Then what hath God to do in governing the world, if he be pleased and displeased with nothing that men do, or with good and evil actions equally? Though you cannot hurt him, you shall find that he will hurt you if you disobey him: and though you cannot make him happy by your holiness, you shall find that he will not make you happy without it.

And if he did work as necessarily as the sun doth shine, according to your similitude; yet,
1. Even the shining of the sun doth not illuminate the blind, nor doth it make the seeds of

thorns and nettles to bring forth vines or roses, nor the gendering of frogs to bring forth men; but it actuateth all things according to the several natures of their powers: and therefore how can you expect that an ignorant unbelieving and unholy soul, should enjoy felicity in God, when in that state they are incapable of it?

2. And if the sun do necessarily illuminate any one, he must necessarily be illuminated; and if it necessarily warm or quicken any thing, it must be necessarily warmed and quickened; else you would assert contradictions.—So if God did necessarily save you and make you happy, you would necessarily be saved and made happy: and that containeth essentially your holiness, your loving, desiring and seeking after God. To be saved or happy without enjoying God by love, or to love him and not desire him, seek him, or obey him, are as great contradictions as to be illuminated without light, or quickened without life. What way soever it be that God conveyeth his sanctifying Spirit, I am sure that if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, the same is none of his, Rom. viii. 9. and that without holiness none shall see God, Heb. xii. 14. and that if you will have the kingdom of God, you must seek it first, preferring it before all earthly things. Matt. vi. 33. John vi. 27. Col. iv. 1—3. And then if all the question that remaineth undecided be, whether God do you wrong or not in damning you, or whether

God be good because he will not save you when he can, I shall leave you to him to receive satisfaction, who will easily silence and confound your impudence, and justify his works and laws. Prepare your accusations against him, if you will needs insist upon them, and try whether he or you shall prevail: but remember that thou art a worm and he is God, and that he will be the only judge when all is done; and ignorance and impiety that prate against him, to their own confusion, in the day of his patience, shall not then usurp the throne.

Object. 2. But how can God be fit for mortals to converse with, when they see him not, and are infinitely below him?

Answ. I hope you will not say that you have nothing to do at home, with your own souls: and yet you never saw your souls. And it is the souls, the reason and the will of men that you daily converse with here in the world, more than their bodies, and yet you never saw their souls, their reason or their wills. If you have no higher light to discern by than your eyesight, you are not men but beasts. If you are men, you have reason, and if you are christians you have faith, by which you know things that you never saw. You have more dependance on the things that are unseen, than on those which you see, and have much more to do with them.

And though God be infinitely above us, yet he condescendeth to communicate to us according

to our capacities: as the sun is far from us, and yet doth not disdain to enlighten, and warm, and quicken a worm or fly here below. If any be yet so much an atheist as to think that religious converse with God is but a fancy, let him well answer me these few questions.

Quest. 1. Doth not the continued being and well-being of the creatures, tell us that there is a God on whom (for being and well-being) they depend, and from whom they are and have whatsoever they are and whatsoever they have; and therefore that passively all the creatures have more respect to him by far than to one another?

Quest. 2. Seeing God communicateth to every creature according to their several capacities, is it not meet then that he deal with man as man, even as a creature rational, capable to know and love and obey his great Creator, and to be happy in the knowledge, love and fruition of him? That man hath such natural faculties and capacities, is not to be denied by a man that knoweth what it is to be a man: and that God hath not given him these in vain, will be easily believed by any that indeed believe that he is God.

Quest. 3. Is there any thing else that is finally worthy of the highest actions of our souls; or that is fully adequate to them, and fit to be our happiness? If not, then we are left either to certain infelicity, contrary to the tendency of

our natures, or else we must seek our felicity in God.

Quest. 4. Is there any thing more certain than that by the title of creation, our maker hath a full and absolute right to all that he hath made; and consequently to all our love and obedience, our time and powers? For whom should they all be used but for him from whom we have them?

Quest. 5. Can any thing be more sure, than that God is the righteous governor of the world? and that he governeth man as a rational creature, by laws and judgment? And can we live under his absolute sovereignty, and under his many righteous laws, and under his promises of salvation to the justified, and under his threatenings of damnation to the unjustified, and yet not have more to do with God than with all the world? If indeed you think that God doth not love and reward the holy and obedient, and punish the ungodly and disobedient, then either you take him not to be the governor of the world, or (which is worse) you take him to be an unrighteous governor: and then you must by the same reason say, that magistrates and parents should do so too, and love and reward the obedient and disobedient alike: but if any man's disobedience were exercised to your hurt, by slandering; or beating, or robbing you, I dare say you would not then commend so indifferent and unjust a governor.

Quest. 6. If it be not needless for man to labor for food and raiment, and necessary provision for his body, how can it be needless for him to labor for the happiness of his soul? If God will not give us our daily bread while we never think of it, or seek it, why should we expect that he will give us heaven though we never think on it, value it, or seek it?

Quest. 7. Is it not a contradiction to be happy in the fruition of God, and yet not to mind him, desire him, or seek him? How is it that the soul can reach its object, but by estimation, desire and seeking after it: and how should it enjoy it but by loving it, and taking pleasure in it?

Quest. 8. While you seem but to wrangle against the duty of believers, do you not plead against the comfort and happiness of believers? For surely the employment of the soul on God (and for him) is the health and pleasure of the soul; and to call away the soul from such employment, is to imprison it in the dungeon of this world, and to forbid us to smell to the sweetest flowers, and confine us to a sink or dunghill; and to forbid us to taste of the food of angels, or of men, and to offer us vinegar and gall, or turn us over to feed with swine. He that pleadeth that there is no such thing as real holiness and communion with God, doth plead in effect that there is no true felicity or delight for any of the sons of men: and how wel-

come should ungodly atheists be unto mankind, that would for ever exclude them all from happiness, and make them believe they are all made to be remedilessly miserable ?

And here take notice of the madness of the unthankful world, that hateth and persecuteth the preachers of the gospel, that bring them the glad tidings of pardon, and hope, and life eternal, of solid happiness, and durable delight ; and yet they are not offended at these atheists and ungodly cavillers, that would take them off from all that is truly good and pleasant, and make them believe that nature hath made them capable of no higher things than beasts, and hath intralled them in remediless infelicity.

Quest. 9. Do you not see by experience that there are a people in the world whose hearts are upon God, and the life to come, and that make it their chiefest care and business to seek him and to serve him ? How then can you say that there is no such thing, or that we are not capable of it, when it is the case of so many before your eyes ? If you say that it is but their fancy or self-deceit ; I answer, that really their hearts are set upon God, and the everlasting world, and that it is their chiefest care and business to attain it ; this is a thing that they feel, and you may see in the bent and labor of their lives ; and therefore you cannot call that a fancy, of which you have so full experience : but whether the motives that have invited them, and engaged

them to such a choice and course, be fancies and deceits or not, let God be judge, and let the awakened consciences of worldlings themselves be judge, when they have seen the end, and tried whether it be earth or heaven that is the shadow, and whether it be God or their unbelieving hearts that was deceived.

Quest. 10. Have you any hopes of living with God for ever, or not? If you have not, no wonder if you live as beasts, when you have no higher expectations than beasts. When we are so blind as to give up all our hopes, we will also give up all our care and holy diligence, and think we have nothing to do with heaven: but if you have any such hopes, can you think that any thing is fitter for the chiefest of your thoughts and cares, than the God and kingdom, which you hope for ever to enjoy? Or is there any thing that can be more suitable, or should be more delightful to your thoughts, than to employ them about your highest hopes, upon your endless happiness and joy? And should not that be now the most noble and pleasant employment for your minds, which is nearest to that which you hope to be exercised in for ever? Undoubtedly he that hath true and serious thoughts of heaven, will highest value that life on earth which is likest to the life in heaven: and he that hateth, or is most averse to that which is nearest to the work of heaven, doth boast in vain of his hopes of heaven.

By this time you may see (if you love not to be blind) that man's chiefest business in the world is with his God, and that our thoughts and all our powers are made to be employed upon him, or for him; and that this is no such needless work as atheists make themselves believe.

Remember that it is the description of the desperately wicked, Ps. x. 4. that God is not in all his thoughts. And if yet you understand it not, I will a little further shew you the evil of such atheistical unhallowed thoughts.

1. There is nothing but darkness in all thy thoughts, if God be not in them. Thou knowest nothing, if thou knowest not him; and thou usest not thy knowledge, if thou use it not on him. To know the creature as without God, is to know nothing: no more than to know all the letters in the book, and not to know their signification or sense. All things in the world are but insignificant ciphers, and of no other sense or use, if you separate them from God, who is their sense and end. If you leave out God in all your studies, you do but dream and dote, and not understand what you seem to understand. Though you were taken for the learnedst men in the world, and were able to discourse of all the sciences, and your thoughts had no lower employment daily than the most sublime speculations which the nature of all the creatures

doth afford, it is all but folly and impertinent dotage, if it reach not unto God.

2. Yea, your thoughts are erroneous and false, which is more than barely ignorant, if God be not in them. You have false thoughts of the world, of your houses and lands, and friends and pleasures, and whatsoever is the daily employment of your minds. You take them to be something, when they are nothing: you are covetous of the empty purse, and know not that you cast away the treasure: you are thirsty after the empty cup, when you wilfully cast away the drink: you hungrily seek to feed upon a painted feast: you murder the creature by separating it from God who is its life, and then you are enamoured on the carcass, and spend your days and thoughts in its cold embracements. Your thoughts are but vagabonds, straggling abroad the world, and following impertinences, if God be not in them. You are like men that walk up and down in their sleep, or like those that have lost themselves in the dark, who weary themselves in going they know not whither, and have no end, nor certain way.

3. If God be not in all your thoughts, they are all in vain. They are like the drone that gathereth no honey: they fly abroad and return home empty: they bring home no matter of honour to God, of profit or comfort to yourselves: they are employed to no more purpose than in your dreams; only they are more capable

of sin: like the distracted thoughts of one that doteth in a fever, they are all but nonsense, whatever you employ them on, while you leave out God, who is the sense of all.

4. If God be not in all your thoughts, they are nothing but confusion: there can be no just unity in them, because they forsake him who is the only centre, and are scattered abroad upon incoherent creatures. There can be no true unity but in God: the further we go from him, the further we run into divisions and confusions. There can be no just method in them, because he is left out that is the beginning and the end. They are not like a well ordered army, where every one is moved by the will of one commander, and all know their colors and their ranks, and unanimously agree to do their work: but like a swarm of flies, that buzz about they know not whither, nor why, nor for what. There is no true government in your thoughts, if God be not in them; they are masterless and vagrants, and have no true order, if they be not ordered by him and to him: if he be not their first and last.

5. If God be not in all your thoughts, there is no life in them: they are but like the motion of a bubble, or a feather in the air: they are impotent as to the resisting of any evil, and as to the doing of any saving good: they have no strength in them, because they are laid out upon objects that have no strength: they have

no quickening, renewing, reforming, encouraging, resolving, confirming power in them, because there is no such power in the things on which they are employed: whereas the thoughts of God and everlasting life, can do wonders upon the soul: they can raise up men above this world, and teach them to despise the worldling's idol, and look upon all the pleasures of the flesh as upon a swine's delight in wallowing in the mire. They can renew the soul, and cast out the most powerful beloved sin, and bring all our powers into the obedience of God, and that with pleasure and delight: they can employ us with the angels, in a heavenly conversation, and shew us the glory of the world above, and advance us above the life of the greatest princes upon earth: but the thoughts of earthly fleshly things have power indeed to delude men, and mislead them, and hurry them about in a vertiginous motion; but no power to support us, or subdue concupiscence, or heal our folly, or save us from temptations, or reduce us from our errors, or help us to be useful in the world, or to attain felicity at last. There is no life, nor power, nor efficacy in our thoughts, if God be not in them.

6. There is no stability or fixedness in your thoughts, if God be not in them. They are like a boat upon the ocean, tossed up and down with winds and waves: the mutable uncertain creatures can yield no rest or settlement to your minds. You are troubled about many things;

and the more you think on them, and have to do with them, the more are you troubled: but you forget the one thing necessary, and fly from the eternal rock, on which you must build if ever you will be established. While the creature is in your thought instead of God, you will be one day deluded with its unwholesome pleasure, and the next day feel it gripe you at the heart: one day it will seem your happiness, and the next you will wish you had never known it: that which seemeth the only comfort of your lives this year, may the next year make you weary of your lives. One day you are impatiently desiring and seeking it, as if you could not live without it; and the next day, or ere long, you are impatiently desiring to be rid of it. You are now taking in your pleasant morsels, and drinking down your delicious draughts, and jovially sporting it with your inconsiderate companions: but how quickly will you be repenting of all this, and complaining of your folly, and vexing yourselves, that you took not warning, and made not a wiser choice in time! The creature was never made to be your end, or rest, or happiness: and therefore you are but like a man in a wilderness or a maze, that may go and go but knoweth not whither, and findeth no end, till you come home to God, who only is your proper end, and make him the lord, and life, and pleasure of your thoughts.

7. As there is no present fixedness in your

thoughts, so the business and pleasure of them will be of very short continuance, if God be not the chief in all. And who would choose to employ his thoughts on such things as he is sure they must soon forget, and never more have any business with to all eternity! You shall think of those houses, and lands, and friends, and pleasures but a little while, unless it be with repenting tormenting thoughts, in the place of misery: you will have no delight to think of any thing, which is now most precious to your flesh, when once the flesh itself decays, and is no more capable of delight. Ps. cxlvi. 4. "His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish."

Call in your thoughts then from these transitory things, that have no consistency or continuance, and turn them unto him with whom they may find everlasting employment and delight: remember not the enticing baits of sensuality and pride, but "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them."

8. Thy thoughts are but sordid, dishonorable, and low, if God be not the chiefest in them. They reach no higher than the habitation of beasts; nor do they attain to any sweeter employment than to meditate on the felicity of a brute: thou chooseth with the fly to feed on dung and filthy ulcers, and as maggots to live on

stinking carrion, when thou mightest have free access to God himself, and mightest be entertained in the court of heaven, and welcomed thither by the holy angels: thou wallowest in the mire with the swine, or diggest thyself a house in the earth, as worms and moles do, when thy thoughts might be soaring up to God, and might be taken up with high and holy and everlasting things. What if your thoughts were employed for preferment, wealth, and honor in the world? Alas! what silly things are these, in comparison of what your souls are capable of! You will say so yourselves, when you see how they will end, and fail your expectations. Imprison not your minds in this infernal cell, when the superior regions are open to their access: confine them not to this narrow vessel of the body, whose tossings and dangers on these boisterous seas will make them restless, and disquiet them with tumultuous passions, when they may safely land in paradise, and there converse with Christ. God made you men, and if you reject not his grace will make you saints: make not yourselves like beasts or vermin. God gave you souls that can step in a moment from earth to heaven, and there foretaste the endless joys: do not you stick them fast in clay, and fetter them with worldly cares, or intoxicate them with fleshly pleasures, nor employ them in the worse than childish toys of ambitious, sensual, worldly men: your thoughts

have manna, angels' food, provided them by God: if you will loathe this and refuse it, and choose with the serpent to feed on the dust, or upon the filth of sin, God shall be judge, and your consciences one day shall be more faithful witnesses, whether you have dealt like wise men or like fools; like friends or enemies to yourselves; and whether you have not chosen baseness, and denied yourselves the advancement which was offered you.

9. If God be not the chiefest in your thoughts, they are no better than dishonest and unjust: you are guilty of denying him his own. He made not your minds for lust and pleasure, but for himself: you expect that your cattle, your goods, your servants, be employed for yourselves, because they are your own: but God may call your minds his own by a much fuller title: for you hold all but derivatively and dependently from him. What will you call it but injustice and dishonesty, if your wife, or children, or servants, or goods, be more at the use and service of others, than of you? If any can shew a better title to your thoughts than God doth, let him have them; but if not, deny him not his own. O straggle not so much from home, for you will be nowhere else so well as there: desire not to follow strangers, you know not whither, nor for what: you have a master of your own, that will be better to you than all the strangers in the world. Bow not down to

creatures, that are but images of the true and solid good: commit not idolatry or adultery with them in your thoughts: remember still that God stands by: bethink you how he will take it at your hands; and how it will be judged of at last, when he pleads his right, his kindness, and solicitations of you; and you have so little to say for any pretence of right or merit in the creature. Why are not men ashamed of the greatest dishonesty against God, when all that have any humanity left them, do take adultery, theft, and other dishonesty against creatures for a shame? The time will come when God and his interest shall be better understood; that this dishonesty against him, will be the matter of the most confounding shame, that ever did or could befall men. Prevent this by the juster exercise of your thoughts, and keeping them pure and chaste to God.

10. If God be not in your thoughts (and the chiefest in them) there will be no matter in them of solid comfort or content. Trouble and deceit will be all their work: when they have fled about the earth, and taken a taste of every flower, they will come loaded home with nothing better than vanity and vexation. Such thoughts may excite the laughter of a fool, and cause that mirth that is called madness, Eccles. vii. 4, 6, and ii. 2. but they will never conduce to settled peace, and durable content; and therefore they are always repented of themselves, and

are troublesome to our review, as being the shame of the sinner, which he would fain be cleared of or disown. Though you may approach the creature with passionate fondness, and the most delightful promises and hopes, be sure of it, you will come off at last with grief and disappointment, if not with the loathing of that which you chose for your delight. Your thoughts are in a wilderness among thorns and briars, when God is not in them as their guide and end: they are lost and torn among the creatures; but rest and satisfaction they will find none. It may be at the present it is pleasanter to you to think of recreation, or business, or worldly wealth, than to think of God: but the pleasure of these thoughts is as delusory, and short-lived, as are the things themselves on which you think. How long will you think with pleasure on such fading transitory things? And the pleasure cannot be great at the present, which reacheth but the flesh and fantasy, and which the possessor knoweth will be but short: nay, you will shortly find by sad experience, that of all the creatures under heaven, there will none be so bitter to your thoughts, as those which you now find greatest carnal sweetness in. O how bitter will the thought of idolized honour, and abused wealth and greatness be to a dying or a damned Dives! The thoughts of that alehouse or playhouse where thou hadst thy greatest pleasure, will

trouble thee more than the thoughts of all the houses in the town besides: the thoughts of that one woman with whom thou didst commit thy pleasant sin, will wound and vex thee more than the thoughts of all the women in the town besides. The thoughts of that beloved sport which thou couldst not be weaned from, will be more troublesome to thee than the thoughts of a thousand other things in which thou hadst no inordinate delight. For the end of sinful mirth is sorrow. When Solomon had tried to please himself to the full, in mirth, in buildings, vineyards, woods, waters, in servants, and possessions, silver, and gold, and cattle, and singers, and instruments of music of all sorts, in greatness, and all that the eye, or appetite, or heart desired, he findeth when he awaked from this pleasant dream, that he had all this while been taken up with vanity and vexation, in so much that he saith on the review, "Therefore I hated life, because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous to me, for all is vanity and vexation of spirit: yea I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun." Eccles. ii. 1, 2, &c. 17, 18. You may toil out and tire yourselves among these briars, in this barren wilderness; but if ever you would feel any solid ground of quietness and rest, it must be by coming off from vanity, and seeking your felicity in God, and living sincerely for him and upon him, as the worldling doth upon the world. His par-

doing mercy must begin your peace, forgiving you your former thoughts, and his healing quickening mercy must increase it, by teaching you better to employ your thoughts, and drawing up your hearts unto himself: and his glorifying mercy must perfect it, by giving you the full intuition and fruition of himself in heaven, and employing you in his perfect love and praise, not leaving any room for creatures, nor suffering a thought to be employed on vanity for ever.

CHAPTER IV.

By this time I hope you may see reason to call yourselves to a strict account, what converse you have been taken up with in the world, and upon what you have exercised your thoughts. Surely you must needs be conscious, that the thoughts which have been denied God, have brought you home but little satisfaction, and have not answered the ends of your creation, redemption, or preservation! and that they are now much fitter matter for your penitential tears, than for your comfort, in the review! I do not think you dare own, and stand to, those thoughts which have been spent for fleshly pleasures, or in unnecessary worldly cares, or that were wasted in impertinent vagaries upon any thing, or nothing, when you should have been

seeking God! I do not think you have now any great pleasure in the review of those thoughts, which once were taken up with pleasure, when your most pleasant thoughts should have been of God. Dare you approve of your rejecting your creator and the great concerns of your soul out of your thoughts, and wasting them upon things unprofitable and vain? Did not God and heaven deserve more of your serious thoughts than any thing else that ever they were employed on? Have you laid them out on any thing that more concerned you; or on any thing more excellent, more honorable, more durable, or that could claim precedency upon any just account? Did you not shut heaven itself out of your thoughts, when you shut out God; and is it not just that God and heaven should shut out you? If heaven be not the principal matter of your thoughts, it is plain that you do not principally love it: and if so, judge you whether those that love it not are fit to be made possessors of it.

O poor distracted senseless world! Is not God great enough to command and take up your chiefest cogitations? Is not heaven enough to find them work, and afford them satisfaction and delight? And yet is the dung and dotage of the world enough? Is your honor and wealth, and fleshly delights and sports enough? God will shortly make you know, whether this were wise and equal dealing! Is God so low, so

little, so undeserving, to be so oft and easily forgotten, and so hardly and so slightly remembered? I tell you, ere long he will make you think of him to your sorrow, whether you will or no, if grace do not now set open your hearts, and procure him better entertainment.

But perhaps you will think that you walk with God, because you think of him sometimes ineffectually, and as on the by. But is he esteemed as your God, if he have not the command, and if he have not the precedency of his creatures? Can you dream that indeed you walk with God, when your hearts were never grieved for offending him, nor never much solicitous how to be reconciled to him; nor much inquisitive whether your state or way be pleasing or displeasing to him? when all the business of an unspeakable importance, which you have to do with God, before you pass to judgment, is forgotten and undone, as if you knew not of any such work that you had to do? when you make no serious preparation for death; when you call not upon God in secret, or in your families, unless with a little heartless lip labour; and when you love not the spirituality of his worship, but only delude your souls with the mockage of hypocritical outside compliment? Do you walk with God while you are plotting for preferment, and gaping after worldly greatness; while you are gratifying all the desires of your flesh, and making provision for the future?

satisfying of its lusts? Rom. xiii. 13. Are you walking with God when you are hating him in his holiness, his justice, his word and ways, and hating all that seriously love and seek him? when you are doing your worst to dispatch the work of your damnation, and put your salvation past all hope, and draw as many to hell with you as you can? If this be a walking with God, you may take further comfort that you shall also dwell with God according to the sense of such a walk: you shall dwell with him as a devouring fire, and as just, whom you thus walked with in the contempt of his mercies, and the provocation of his justice!

I tell you, if you walked with God indeed, his authority would rule you, his greatness would much take up your minds, and leave less room for little things: you would trust his promises, and fear his threatenings, and be awed by his presence, and the idols of your hearts would fall before him; he would overpower your lusts, and call you off from your ambitious and covetous designs, and obscure all the creature's glory. Believing serious effectual thoughts of God, are very much different from the common, doubtful, dreaming, ineffectual cogitations of the ungodly world.

Object. But (perhaps some will say)—This seemeth to be the work of preachers, and not of every christian, to be always meditating of God: poor people must think of other matters: they

have their business to do, and their families to provide for: and ignorant people are weak-headed, and are not able either to manage or endure a contemplative life: so much thinking of God will make them melancholy and mad, as experience tells us it hath done by many: and therefore this is no exercise for them.

To this I answer, 1. Every christian hath a God to serve, and a soul to save, and a Christ to believe in and obey, and an endless happiness to secure and enjoy, as well as preachers: pastors must study to instruct their flock, and to save themselves, and those that hear them: the people must study to understand and receive the mercy offered them, and to make their own calling and election sure. It is not said of pastors only, but of every blessed man, that his delight is in the law of the Lord, and therein doth he meditate day and night. Ps. i. 2. 2. And the due meditation of the soul upon God, is so far from taking you off from your necessary business in the world, that it is the only way to your orderly and successful management of it. 3. And it is not a distracting thoughtfulness that I persuade you to, or which is included in a christian's walk with God: but it is a directing, quickening, exalting, comforting course of meditation. Many a hundred have grown melancholy and mad with careful discontentful thoughts of the world; it doth not follow therefore that no man must think of the world at all,

For fear of being mad or melancholy; but only that they should think of it more regularly, and correct the error of their thoughts and passions:—so is it about God and heavenly things: our thoughts are to be well ordered, and the error of them cured, and not the use of them forborne. Atheism and impiety, and forgetting God, are unhappy means to prevent melancholy. There are wiser means for avoiding madness, than by renouncing all our reason, and living by sense like the beasts that perish, and forgetting that we have an everlasting life to live.

But yet because I am sensible that some do here mistake on the other hand, and I would not lead you into any extreme, I shall fully remove the scruple contained in this objection, by shewing you in those following propositions, in what sense, and how far your thoughts must be taken up with God (supposing what was said in the beginning, where I described to you the duty of walking with God.)

Pro. 1. When we tell you that your thoughts must be on God, it is not a course of idle musing, or mere thinking that we call you to, but it is a necessary practical thinking of that which you have to do, and of him that you must love, obey and enjoy. You will not forget your parents, or husband, or wife, or friend; and yet you will not spend your time in sitting still and thinking of them, with a musing unprofitable thoughtfulness; but you will have such thoughts

of them, and so many as are necessary to the ends, even to the love and service which you owe them, and to the delight that your hearts should have in the fruition of them. You cannot love, or obey, or take pleasure in those that you will not think of: you will follow your trades, or your master's service but unhappily, if you will not think on them. Thinking is not the work that we must take up with: it is but a subservient instrumental duty, to promote some greater higher duty: therefore we must think of God, that we may love him, and do his service, and trust him, and fear him, and hope in him, and make him our delight. And all this is it that we call you to, when we are persuading you to think on God.

2. An hypocrite, or a wicked enemy of God, may think of him speculatively, and perhaps be more frequent in such thoughts than many practical believers. A learned man may study about God, as he doth about other matters, and names, and notions; and propositions and decisions concerning God, may be a principal part of his learning. A preacher may study about God and the matters of God, as a physician or a lawyer do about the matters of their own profession, either for the pleasure which knowledge as knowledge brings to human nature, or for the credit of being esteemed wise and learned, or because their gain and maintenance comes in this way. They that fill many volumes with

controversies concerning God, and fill the church with contentions and troubles by them, and their own hearts with malice and uncharitableness against those that are not of their opinions, have many and many a thought of God, which yet will do nothing to the saving of their souls, no more than they do to the sanctifying of them. And such learned men may think more orthodoxly and methodically concerning God, than many an honest serious christian, who yet thinks of him more effectually and savingly; even as they can discourse more orderly and copiously of God, when yet they have no saving knowledge of him.

3. All men must not bestow so much time in meditation as some must do. It is the calling of ministers to study so as to furnish their minds with all those truths concerning God, which are needful to the edification of the church; and so to meditate on these things as to give themselves wholly to them, 1 Tim. iv. 15, 16: it is both the work of their common and their special calling. The study necessary to christians as such, belongeth as well to others as to them: but other men have another special or particular calling, which also they must think of, so far as the nature and ends of their daily labors do require. It is a hurtful error to imagine that men must either lay by their callings to meditate on God, or that they must do them negligently, or to be taken up in the

midst of their employments with such studies of God as ministers are that are separated to that work.

4. No man is bound to be continually taken up with actual, distinct cogitations about God: for in duty we have many other things to think on, which must have their time: and as we have callings to follow, and must eat our bread in the sweat of our brows, so we must manage them with prudence: a good man will guide his affairs with discretion. Ps. cxii. 5. It is both necessary as duty, and necessary as a means to the preservation of our very faculties, that both body and mind have their times of employment about our lawful business in the world: the understandings of many cannot bear it to be always employed on the greatest and most serious things: like lute strings they will break, if they be raised too high, and be not let down and relaxed when the lesson is played. To think of nothing else but God, is to break the law of God, and to confound the mind, and to disable it to think aright of God, or any thing. As he that bid us pray continually, did not mean that we should do nothing else, or that actual prayer should have no interruptions, but that habitual desires should on all meet occasion be actuated and expressed; so he that would be chief in all our thoughts, did never mean that we should have no thoughts of any thing else, or that our serious meditation on him should be continual

without interruption: but that the final intending of God, and our dependance on him, should be so constant as to be the spring or mover of the rest of the thoughts and actions of our lives.

5. An habitual intending God as our end, and depending on his support, and subjection to his government, will carry on the soul in a sincere and constant course of godliness, though the actual most observed thoughts of the soul, be fewer in number about God, than about the means that lead unto him, and the occurrences in our way. The soul of man is very active and comprehensive, and can think of several things at once; and when it is once clear and resolved in any case, it can act according to that knowledge and resolution, without any present sensible cogitation; nay, while its actual most observed thoughts are upon something else. A musician that hath an habitual skill, can keep time and tune while he is thinking of some other matter: a weaver can cast his shuttle right, and work truly, while he is thinking or talking of other things: a man can eat and drink with discretion while he talks of other things: some men can dictate to two or three scribes at once, upon divers subjects: a traveller can keep on his way, though he seldom think distinctly of his journeys end, but be thinking or discoursing most of the way upon other matters; for before he undertook his journey he thought both of the end and way, and resolved then which way to

go, and that he would go through all both fair and foul, and not turn back, till he saw the place: and this habitual understanding and resolution, may be secretly and unobservedly active, so as to keep a man from erring, and from turning back, though at the same time the traveller's most sensible thoughts and his discourse may be upon something else. When a man is once resolved of his end, and hath laid his design, he is past deliberating of that, and therefore hath less use of his cogitations thereabout; but is readier to lay them out upon the means, which may be still uncertain, or may require his frequent deliberation. We have usually more thoughts and speeches by the way, about our company, or our horses, or inns, or other accommodations, or the fairness or foulness of the way, and other such occurrences, than we have about the place that we are going to: and yet this secret intention of our end, will bring us thither. So when a soul hath cast up his accounts, and hath renounced a worldly and sensual felicity, and hath fixed his hopes and resolutions upon heaven, and is resolved to cast himself upon Christ, and take God for his only portion, this secret habitual resolution will do much to keep him constant in the way, though his thoughts and talk be frequently on other things: yea, when we are thinking of the creature, and feel no actual thoughts of God, it is yet God more than the creature that we think

of: for we did before hand look on the creature as God's work, representing him unto the world, and as his talents which we must employ for him, and as every creature is related to him: and this estimation of the creature is still habitually (and in some secret less-perceived acts) most prevalent in the soul. Though I am not always sensibly thinking of the king, when I use his coin, or obey his law, &c. yet it is only as his coin still that I use it, and as his laws that I obey them. Weak habits cannot do their work without great carefulness of thoughts: but perfect habits will act a man with little thoughtfulness, as coming near the natural way of operation. And indeed the imperfection of our habitual godliness doth make our serious thoughts, and vigilance, and industry to be the more necessary to us.

6. There are some thoughts of God that are necessary to the very being of a holy state; as that God be so much in our thoughts, as to be preferred before all things else, and principally beloved and obeyed; and to be the end of our lives, and the bias of our wills: and there are some thoughts of God that are necessary only to acting and increase of grace.

7. So great is the weakness of our habits, so many and great are the temptations to be overcome, so many difficulties are in our way, and the occasions so various for the exercise of each grace, that it behoveth a christian to exercise as

much thoughtfulness about his end and work, as hath any tendency to promote his work and to attain his end: but such a thoughtfulness as hindereth us in our work, by stopping, or distracting, or diverting us, is no way pleasing unto God. So excellent is our end, that we can never encourage and delight the mind too much in the forethoughts of it. So sluggish are our hearts, and so loose and inconstant are our apprehensions and resolutions, that we have need to be most frequently quickening them, and lifting at them, and renewing our desires, and suppressing the contrary desires, by the serious thoughts of God and immortality. Our thoughts are the bellows that must kindle the flames of love, desire, hope, and zeal: our thoughts are the spur that must put on a sluggish tired heart—and so far as they conduce to any such works and ends as these, they are desirable and good. But what master loveth to see his servant sit down and think, when he should be at work? or to use his thoughts only to grieve and vex himself for his faults, but not to mend them? to sit down lamenting that he is so bad and unprofitable a servant, when he should be up and doing his master's business as well as he is able? Such thoughts are sins as hinder us from duty, or discourage or unfit us for it, however they may go under a better name.

8: The godly themselves are very much wanting in the holiness of their thoughts, and the

liveliness of their affections. Sense leadeth away the thoughts too easily after these present sensible things, while faith being infirm, the thoughts of God and heaven are much disadvantaged by their invisibility. Many a gracious soul crieth out, O that I could think as easily, and as affectionately, and as unweariedly about the Lord and the life to come, as I can do about my friends, my health, my habitation, my business, and other concernments of this life! But alas! such thoughts of God and heaven have far more enemies and resistance, than the thoughts of earthly matters have.

9. It is not distracting, vexatious thoughts of God, that the holy scriptures call us to; but it is to such thoughts as tend to the healing, and peace, and felicity of the soul; and therefore it is not to a melancholy, but a joyful life. If God be better than the world, it must needs be better to think of him. If he be more beloved than any friend, the thoughts of him should be sweeter to us. If he be the everlasting hope and happiness of the soul, it should be a fore-taste of happiness to find him nearest to our hearts. The nature and use of holy thoughts, and of all religion, is but to exalt, and sanctify, and delight the soul, and bring it up to everlasting rest: and is this the way to melancholy or madness? Or is it not liker to make men melancholy, to think of nothing but a vain, deceitful, and vexatious world, that hath much

to disquiet us, but nothing to satisfy us, and can give the soul no hopes of any durable delight?

10. Yet as God is not equally related unto all, so is he not the same to all men's thoughts. If a wicked enemy of God and godliness be forced and frightened into some thoughts of God, you cannot expect that they should be as sweet and comfortable thoughts as those of his most obedient children are. While a man is under the guilt and power of his reigning sin, and under the wrath and curse of God, unpardoned, unjustified, a child of the devil, it is not this man's duty to think of God, as if he were fully reconciled to him, and took pleasure in him as in his own. Nor is it any wonder if such a man think of God with fear, and think of his sin with grief and shame. Nor is it any wonder if the justified themselves do think of God with fear and grief, when they have provoked him by some sinful and unkind behaviour, or are cast into doubts of their sincerity and interest in Christ, and when he hides his face, or assaulteth them with his terrors. To doubt whether a man shall live for ever in heaven or hell, may rationally trouble the thoughts of the wisest man in the world; and it were but sottishness not to be troubled at it: David himself could say, "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my sore ran in the night and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God and

was troubled: I complained and my spirit was overwhelmed. Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak.—Will the Lord cast off for ever?" Ps. lxxvii. 2—5, 7.

Yet all the sorrowful thoughts of God, which are the duty of either the godly or the wicked, are but the necessary preparatives of their joy. It is not to melancholy, distraction, or despair, that God calleth any, even the worst: but it is that the wicked would "Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near: that he would forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, and he will abundantly pardon." Isa. lv. 6, 7. Despair is sin; and the thoughts that tend to it are sinful thoughts, even in the wicked. If worldly crosses, or the sense of danger to the soul had cast any into melancholy, or overwhelmed them with fears, you can name nothing in the world that in reason should be so powerful a remedy to recover them, as the thoughts of God, his goodness and mercy and readiness to receive and pardon those that turn unto him, his covenant and promises and grace through Christ, and the everlasting happiness which all may have that will accept and seek it in the time of grace, and prefer it before the deceitful transitory pleasures of the world. If the thoughts of God and of the heavenly everlasting joys, will not comfort the soul, and cure

a sad despairing mind, I know not what can rationally do it. Though yet it is true that an awakened sinner must needs be in a trembling state, till he find himself at peace with God; and mistaken christians that are cast into causeless doubts and fears, by the malice of Satan, are unlikely to walk comfortably with God, till they are resolved and recovered from their mistakes and fears.

CHAPTER V.

Object. But it may be the objector will be ready to think, that—If it be indeed our duty to walk with God, yet thoughts are no considerable part of it: what more uncertain or mutable than our thoughts? It is deeds and not thoughts that God regardeth: to do no harm to any, but to do good to all, this is indeed to walk with God! You set a man upon a troublesome and impossible work, while you set him upon so strict a guard and so much exercise of his thoughts! What cares the Almighty for my thoughts?

Ans. 1. If God know better than you, and be to be believed, then thoughts are not so inconsiderable as you suppose. Doth he not say, that “the thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the Lord?” Prov. xv. 26. It is the work of the gospel by its power to pull down

strong holds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. 2 Cor. x. 4, 5. The unrighteous man's forsaking his thoughts, is part of his necessary conversion. Isa. lv. 7. It was the description of the deplorable state of the old world, Gen. vi. 5, 6, "God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; and it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart." Judge by this whether thoughts be so little regarded by God as you imagine. David saith of himself "I hate vain thoughts." Ps. cxix. 113. Solomon saith, "The thoughts of the righteous are right." Prov. xii. 5. Paul saith that charity thinketh not evil. 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

2. Thoughts are the issue of a rational soul. And if its operations be contemptible, its essence is contemptible: if its essence be noble, its operations are considerable. If the soul be more excellent than the body, its operations must be more excellent. To neglect our thoughts, and not employ them upon God, and for God, is to vilify our noblest faculties, and deny God, who is a Spirit, that spiritual service which he requireth.

3. Our thoughts are commonly our most cordial voluntary acts, and shew the temper and

inclination of the heart: and therefore are regardable to God that searcheth the heart, and calleth first for the service of the heart.

4. Our thoughts are radical and instrumental acts: such as they are, such are the actions of our lives. Christ telleth us that out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, which defile the man. Matt. xv. 19.

5. Our thoughts are under a law, as well as words and deeds. Prov. xxiv. 9. "The thought of foolishness is sin." And Matt. v. 28, &c. Christ extendeth the law even to the thoughts and desires of the heart. And under the law it is said, Deut. xv. 9. "Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart," &c. viz. of unmercifulness towards thy brother.

6. Thoughts can reach higher much than sense, and may be employed upon the most excellent and invisible objects, and therefore are fit instruments to elevate the soul that would converse with God. Though God be infinitely above us, our thoughts may be exercised on him: our persons never were in heaven, and yet our conversation must be in heaven, Phil. iii. 20. And how is that but by your thoughts? Though we see not Christ, yet by the exercise of believing thoughts on him, we love him and rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Though God be invisible, yet our meditation of him may be sweet, and we may delight in the Lord. Ps.

civ. 34. Say not that all this is but fantastical and delusory, as long as thoughts of things unseen are meeter to actuate and elevate the love, desires and delights of the soul, and to move and guide us in a regular and holy life, than the sense of lesser present good. The thoughts are not vain or delusory, unless the object of them be false and vain and delusory. Where the object is great, and sure and excellent, the thoughts of such things are excellent operations of the soul. If thoughts of vain glory, wealth and pleasure, can delight the ambitious, covetous and sensual; no wonder if the thoughts of God and life eternal afford us solid high delights.

7. The thoughts are not so liable to be counterfeit and hypocritical as are the words and outward deeds: and therefore they shew more what the man is, and what is in his heart. For as Solomon saith, Prov. xxiii. 7. "As he thinketh in his heart, so is he."

8. Our thoughts may exercise the highest graces of God in man; and also shew those graces, as being their effects. How is our faith, and love, and desire, and trust, and joy, and hope to be exercised but by our cogitations? If grace were not necessary and excellent, it would not be wrought by the Spirit of God, and called the divine nature, and the image of God: and if grace be excellent, the use and exercise of it is excellent: and therefore our thoughts

by which it is exercised must needs have their excellency too.

9. Our thoughts must be the instruments of our improving all holy truth in scripture, and all the mercies which we receive, and all the afflictions which we undergo. What good will reading a chapter in the Bible do to any one that never thinketh on it? Our delight in the law of God must engage us to meditate in it day and night. Ps. i. 2. What good shall he get by hearing a sermon that exerciseth not his thoughts for the receiving and digesting it. Our considering what is said, is the way in which we may expect that God should give us understanding in all things. 2 Tim. ii. 7. What the better will he be for any of the merciful providences of God, who never bethinks him whence they come, or what is the use and end that they are given for? what good will he get by any affliction, that never bethinks him who it is that chastiseth him, and for what, and how he must get them removed and sanctified to his good? A man is but like one of the pillars in the church, or like the corpse which he treadeth on, or at best but like the dog that followeth him thither for company, if he use not his thoughts about the work which he hath in hand, and cannot say, as Ps. xlviii. 9, "We have thought of thy loving kindness O God in the midst of thy temple." He that biddeth you hear, doth also bid you take heed how you hear, Luke

viii. 18. And you are commanded to lay up the word in your heart and soul. Deut. xi. 18, 19. "And to set your hearts to all the words which are testified among you: for it is not a vain thing for you, because it is your life."

10. Our thoughts are so considerable a part of God's service, that they are oft put for the whole. Mal. iii. 16. "A book of remembrance was written for them that feared the Lord and that thought upon his name." Our believing and loving God, and trusting in him, and desiring him and his grace, are the principal parts of his service, which are exercised immediately by our thoughts: and in praise and prayer it is this inward part that is the soul and life of all. He is a foolish hypocrite that thinks to be heard for his much babbling. Matt. vi. 7.

And on the contrary the thoughts are named as the sum of all iniquity: Isa. lix. 7. "Their thoughts are thoughts of iniquity." Isa. lxxv. 2. "I have spread out my hands all the day long unto a rebellious people, which walketh in a way that was not good, after their own thoughts." Jer. iv. 14. "O Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness that thou mayest be saved: how long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee!" Ps. xiv. 1. "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God."

11. A man's thoughts are the appointed orderly way for the conversion of a sinner, and the preventing of his sin and misery. David

saith, Ps. cxix. 59, "I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies." The prodigal (Luke xv. 17, 18) came to himself and returned to his father, by the success of his own consideration. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Consider your ways," Hag. i. 5, is a voice that every sinner should hear. Ezek. xviii. 14. It is he that considereth and doth not according to his father's sins, that shall not die. Therefore it is God's desire,—O that they were wise and understood this, and that they would consider their latter end. Deut. xxxii. 29. It is either men's inconsiderateness, or the error of their thoughts that is the cause of all their wickedness. Isa. i. 3. "My people doth not consider." Paul verily thought that he ought to do many things against the name of Jesus. Acts xxvi. 9. Many deceive themselves by thinking themselves something when they are nothing. Gal. vi. 3. They think it strange that we run not with them to excess of riot; and therefore they speak evil of us. 1 Pet. iv. 4. Disobedient formalists consider not that they do evil, when they think they are offering acceptable sacrifices to God. Eccles. v. 1, 2. The very murder of God's holy ones hath proceeded from these erroneous thoughts: they that kill you shall think they do God service. John xvi. 2. All the ambition, and covetousness, and injustice, and cruelty following thereupon, which troubleth the world, and ruineth men's souls, is, from their erroneous

thoughts, overvaluing these deceitful things. Ps. xlix. 11. "Their inward thought is that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations." The presumptuous and impenitent are surprised by destruction, for want of thinking of it to prevent it: "In such an hour as you think not, the Son of Man cometh."

12. Lastly, the thoughts are the most constant actions of a man, and therefore most of the man is in them. We are not always reading, or hearing, or praying, or working; but we are always thinking: and therefore it doth especially concern us to see that this constant breath of the soul be sweet, and that this constant stream be pure and run in the right channel. Well, therefore, did David make this his request, Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. "Search me O God and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." I say, therefore, to those that insist on this irrational objection, that these very thoughts of their's, concerning the inconsiderableness of thoughts, are so foolish and ungodly, that when they understand the evil even of these, they will know that thoughts were more to be regarded. "If therefore thou hast done foolishly in lifting up thyself, or if thou hast thought evil, lay thy hand upon thy mouth."

And though, after all this, I still confess that it is so exceeding hard a matter to keep the thoughts

in holy exercise and order, that even the best do daily and hourly sin, in the omissions, the disorder, or the vanity of their thoughts; yet for all that we must needs conclude that the inclination and design of our thoughts must be principally for God, and that the thoughts are principal instruments of the soul, in acting it in his service, and moving it towards him, and in all this holy work of our walking with God: and therefore to imagine that thoughts are inconsiderable and of little use, is to unman us and unchristen us. The labour of the mind is necessary for the attaining the felicity of the mind, as the labour of the body is necessary for the things that belong unto the body. As bodily idleness bringeth unto beggary, when the diligent hand makes rich; so the idleness of the soul doth impoverish the soul, when the laborious christian liveth plentifully and comfortably through the blessing of God upon his industry and labour. You cannot expect that God appear to you in a bodily shape, that you may have immediate converse with him in the body: the corporal eating of him in transubstantiate bread, supposed common to men and mice or dogs, we leave to papists, who have made themselves a singular new religion, in despite of the common sense and reason of mankind, as well as of the scriptures and the judgment of the church. It is in the spirit that you must converse with God who is a Spirit. The mind seeth

him by faith, who is invisible to the bodily eyes. Nay, if you will have a true and saving knowledge of God, you must not liken him to any thing that is visible, nor have any corporal conceivings of him: earthly things may be the glass in which we may behold him, while we are here in the flesh, but our conceivings of him must be spiritual; and minds that are immersed in flesh and earth, are unmeet to hold communion with him: the natural man knoweth him not, and the carnal mind is enmity to him, and they that are in the flesh cannot please him. Rom. viii. It is the pure, abstracted, elevated soul, that understandeth by experience what it is to walk with God.

CHAPTER VI.

§ 1. Having in the foregoing uses reprov'd the atheism and contempt of God, which ungodly men are continually guilty of, and endeavour'd to convince them of the necessity and desirableness of walking with God, and in particular of improving our thoughts for holy converse with him, and answered the objections of the impious and atheists; I shall next endeavour to cure the remnants of this disease, in those that are sincerely holy, who live too strangely to God their father in the world. In the performance of this,

I shall first shew you what are the benefits of this holy life which should make it appear desirable and delightful. 2. I shall shew you why believers should addict themselves to it as doubly obliged, and how it appeareth that their neglect of it is a sin of special aggravations. This is the remainder of my task.

§ 2. I. To walk with God in a holy and heavenly conversation, is the employment most suitable to human nature: not to its corrupt disposition, nor to the carnal interest and appetite; but to nature as nature, to man as man. It is the very work that he was made for: the faculties and frame of soul and body were composed for it by the wise Creator: they are restored for it by the gracious Redeemer. Though in corrupted nature where sensuality is predominant, there is an estrangedness from God, and an enmity and hatred of him, so that the wicked are more averse to all serious holy converse with him (in prayer, contemplation, and a heavenly life) than they are to a worldly sinful life; yet all this is but the disease of nature, corrupting its appetite, and turning it against that proper food, which is most suitable to its sound desires, and necessary to its health and happiness. Though sinful habits are become as it were a second nature to the ungodly, so depraving their judgments and desires, that they verily think the business and pleasures of the flesh are most suitable to them; yet these are as

contrary to nature as nature, (that is, to the primitive tendencies of all our faculties, and the proper use to which they were fitted by our Creator, and to that true felicity which is the end of all our parts and powers) even as madness is contrary to the rational nature, though it were hereditary.

1. What can be more agreeable to the nature of man, than to be rational and wise, and to live in the purest exercise of reason? And certainly there is nothing more rational than that we should live to God, and gladly accept of all that communion with him which our natures on earth are capable of. Nothing can be more reasonable than for the reasonable soul to be entirely addicted to him that did create it, that doth preserve it, and by whom it doth subsist and act. Nothing is more reasonable than that the absolute Lord of nature be honored and served wholly by his own. Nothing is more reasonable than that the reasonable creature do live in the truest dependence upon, and subordination to the highest reason; and that derived, imperfect, defectible wisdom be subservient to and guided by the primitive, perfect, indefectible wisdom. It is most reasonable that the children depend upon the father, and the foolish be ruled by the most wise, and that the subjects be governed by the universal king, and that they honor him and obey him; and that the indigent apply themselves to him that is all-sufficient,

and is most able and ready to supply their wants; and that the impotent rest upon him that is omnipotent.

2. Nothing can be more reasonable, than that the reasonable nature should intend its end, and seek after its true and chief felicity: and that it should love good as good, and therefore prefer the chiefest good before that which is transitory and insufficient. Reason commandeth the reasonable creature to avoid its own delusion and destruction, and to rest upon him that can everlastingly support us, and not upon the creature that will deceive us and undo us: and to prefer the highest and noblest converse before that which is inferior, unprofitable and base; and that we rejoice more in the highest, purest, and most durable delights, than in those that are sordid, and of short continuance. And who knoweth not that God is the chiefest good, and true felicity of man, the everlasting rock, the durable delight, and to be preferred before his creatures? And who might not find, that would use his reason, that all things below are vanity and vexation?

3. Nothing can be more rational and agreeable to man's nature, than that the superior faculties should govern the inferior; that the brutish part be subject to the rational; and that the ends and objects of this higher faculty be preferred before the objects of the lower, that the objects of sense be made subservient to the

objects of reason. If this be not natural and rational, then it is natural to man to be no man, but a beast, and reasonable to be unreasonable. Now it is evident that a holy living unto God, is but the improvement of true reason, and its employment for and upon its noblest object, and its ultimate end; and that a sensual life is the exercise of the inferior brutish faculties, in predominancy above and before the rational: and therefore to question whether God or the creature should be first sought, and loved, and principally desired, and delighted in, and served, is but to question whether we should live like men or like beasts, and whether dogs or wise men be fitter companions for us; and whether the rider or the horse should have the rule: whether the rational or sensitive powers be superior and proper to the nature of a man.

Object. But there is a middle state of life, betwixt the sensual and the divine or holy life which sober philosophers did live, and this is the most natural life, and most properly so called.

Answ. I deny this: there is no middle state of life, if you denominate the several states of life from the several ends, or the several powers. I grant that the very sensitive powers in man, especially the imagination, is much advanced by the conjunction of reason, above that of a brute: and I grant that the delights of the fantasy may be preferred before the immediate

pleasure of the senses: and I grant that some little distant knowledge of God, and things divine, and hopes of attaining them, may affect an unsanctified man with an answerable pleasure. But all this is nothing to prove that there is a third sort of end, or of powers, and so a third or middle state of life, specifically distinct from the sensitive and the holy life. Besides, the vegetative man hath no other life or faculties, than the sensitive and the rational; and therefore one of these must be in predominancy or rule: and therefore he can have no middle sort or end, and therefore no middle state of life, that can be said to be agreeable to his nature. Those that seek and take up their chief felicity in riches and plenty, and provisions for the flesh, though not in present pleasing of the sense, do live but the life of sensuality. A fox or dog takes pleasure when he hath eaten his belly full, to hide and lay up the rest; and so doth the bee to fill the hive, and make provision for the winter. The proud that delight in honour and applause, and making others subject to their lusts, do live but the life of sensuality: a dog, a horse, and other brutes, have something of the same. They that are grave through melancholy, or because they can reach no great matter in the world, and because their old or duller spirits are not much pleased with juvenile delights, and so live retiredly, and seek no higher pleasure or felicity, but only sit down with the weeping or

the laughing philosopher, lamenting or deriding the vanity of the world, do yet live no other than a sensual life: as an old dog that hath no pleasure in hunting or playfulness, as he had when he was a whelp; only he is less deluded and less vain, than other sensualists that find more pleasure in their course.

All the doubt is concerning those that place their felicity in knowledge, and those that delight in moral virtues, or that delight in studying of God, though they are no christians.

The point is weighty, and hath oft unhappily fallen into injudicious hands. I shall endeavour to resolve it as truly, clearly and impartially as I can. 1. It is a great error against the nature of man, to say, that knowledge, as such, is fit to be any man's chief and ultimate end: it may be that act which is next the enjoying act of the will, which is it that indeed is next the end, objectively considered; but it is not that act which we call *ultimate ultimus*. And this is plain 1. Because the object of the understanding, which is truth, is not formally the nearest object or matter of full felicity or delight: it is goodness that is the nearest object. 2. And therefore the office of the intellect is but introductive and subservient to the office of the will, to apprehend the verity of good, and present it to the will to be prosecuted or embraced, or delighted in. There are many truths that are ungrateful and vexatious, and which men would

wish to be no truths ; and there is a knowledge which is troublesome, useless, undesirable and tormenting, which even a wise man would fain avoid if he knew how. Morality is but preparatively in the intellect ; and therefore intellectual acts, as such, are not morally good, or evil, but only participatively, as subject to the will. And therefore knowledge, as such, being not a moral good, can be no other than such a natural good as is *bonum alicui*, only so far as it tendeth to some welfare or happiness, or pleasure of the possessor or some other : and this welfare or pleasure is either that which is suited to the sensitive powers, or to the rational (which is to be found in the love of God alone.)

2. I add therefore that even those men that seem to take up their felicity in common knowledge, indeed do but make their knowledge subservient to something else which they take for their felicity ; for knowledge of evil may torment them : it is only to know something which they take to be good, that is their delight ; and it is the complacency or love of that good at the heart, which sets them on work, and causeth the delight of knowing. If you will say that common knowledge as knowledge doth immediately delight, yet will it be found but such a pleasing of the fantasy, as an ape hath in spying marvels, which if it have no end that is higher, is still but a sensitive delight ; but if it be referred to a higher delight (in God) it doth

participate of the nature of it. Delight in general is the common end of men and brutes: but in specie they are distinguished as sensual or rational.

3. If you suppose a philosopher to be delighted in studying mathematics, or any of the works of God, either he hath herein an end, or no end beyond the knowledge of the creature: either he terminateth his desires and delights in the creature, or else useth it as a means to raise him to the Creator. If he study and delight in the creature ultimately, this is indeed the act of a rational creature, and an act of reason, as to the faculty it proceeds from (and so is a rational contrivance for sensual ends and pleasures:) but it is but the error of reason, and is no more agreeable to the rational nature, than the deceit of the senses is to the sensitive: nor is it finally to be numbered with the operations felicitating human nature, any more than an erroneous dream of pleasure, or than that man is to be numbered with the lovers of learning, who taketh pleasure in the binding, leaves or letters of the book, while he understandeth nothing of the sense. But if this philosopher seek to know the Creator in and by the creatures, and take delight in the maker's power, wisdom and goodness, which appeareth in them, then this is truly a rational delight, in itself considered, and beseeming a man. And if he reach so far in it, as to make God his highest desire

and delight, overpowering the desires and delights of sensuality, he shall be happy, as being led by the Son unto the Father: but if he make but some little approaches towards it, and drown all such desires in the sensual desires and delights, he is then but an unhappy sensualist, and liveth brutishly in the tenor of his life, though in some acts in part he operate rationally as a man.

The like I may say of them that are said to place their delight in moral virtues. Indeed nothing is properly a moral good (or virtue) but that which is exercised upon God as our end, or upon the creature as a means to this end. To study and know mere notions of God, or what is to be held and said of him in discourse, is not to study or to know God, no more than to love the language and phrase of holy writing, is to love God. To study God as one that is less regardable and desirable than our sensual delights, is but to blaspheme him. To study, seek, and serve him as one that can promote or hinder our sensual felicity, is but to abuse him as a means to your sensuality. And for the virtues of temperance, justice, or charity, they are but analogically and *secundum quid* to be found in any ungodly person: materially they may have them in an eminent degree; but not as they are informed by the end which moralizeth them. Jezabel's fast was not formally a virtue, but an odious way of hypocrisy to oppress the innocent.

He that doth works of justice or mercy, to evil ends only, (as for applause, or to deceive, &c.) and not from the true principles of justice and mercy, doth not thereby exercise moral virtue, but hypocrisy, and other vice. He that doth works of justice and mercy, out of mere natural compassion to others, and desire of their good, without respect to God, as obliging, or rewarding, or desiring it, doth perform such a natural good work, as a lamb or a gentle beast doth to his fellows, which hath not the true form of moral virtue, but the matter only. He that in such works hath some little by-respect to God, but more to his carnal interest among men, doth that which on the by participateth of moral good, or is such *secundum quid*, but not *simpliciter*, being to be denominated from the part predominant. He that doth works of justice or charity principally to please God, and in true obedience to his will, and a desire to be conformed thereto, doth that which is formally a moral good, and holy, though there may be abhorred mixtures of worse respects.

So that there are but two states of life here: one of those that walk after the flesh, and the other of those that walk after the spirit. However the flesh hath several materials and ways of pleasure: and even the rational actings that have a carnal end, are carnal finally and morally; though they are acts of reason; for they are but the errors of reason, and defectiveness of

true rationality; and being but the acts of erroneous reason as captivated by the flesh, and subservient to the carnal interest, they are themselves to be denominated carnal: and so even the reasonable soul, as biased by sensuality, and captivated thereto, is included in the name of "flesh" in scripture.

How much moral good is in that course of piety or obedience to God, which proceedeth only from the fear of God's judgments, without any love to him, I shall not now discuss, because I have too far digressed already.

All that I have last said, is to shew you the reasonableness of living unto God, as being indeed the proper and just employment of the superior faculties of the soul, and their government of the lower faculties. For if any other called moralists do seem to subject the sensual life to the rational, either they do but seem to do so, (the sensual interest being indeed predominant, and their rational operations subjected thereto); or at the best, it is but some poor and erroneous employment of the rational faculties which they exercise, or some weak approaches towards that high and holy life, which is indeed the life which the rational nature was created for, and which is the right improvement of it.

4. Moreover, nothing is more beseeming the nature of man, than to aspire after the highest and noblest improvement of itself; and to live the most excellent life that it is capable of. For

every nature tendeth to its own perfection. But it is most evident that to walk with God in holiness, is a thing that human nature is capable of, and that is the highest life that we are capable of on earth; and therefore it is the life most suitable to our natures.

5. And what can be more rational and beseeming a created nature, than to live to those ends, which our Creator intended in the fabrication of our natures? It is his ends that are principally to be served. But the very composure of our faculties plainly prove, that his end was that we should be fitted for his service: he gave us no powers or capacity in vain; and therefore to serve him and walk with him, is most suitable to our natures.

Object. That is natural which is first, and born with us: but our enmity to holiness is first, and not our holiness.

Answer. It may be called natural indeed, because it is first, and born with us; and in that respect we confess that sin and not holiness is natural to us. But holiness is called natural to us, in a higher respect, because it was the primitive natural constitution of man, and was before sin, and is the perfection or health of nature, and the right employment and improvement of it, and tends to its happiness. An hereditary leprosy may be called natural, as it is first, and before health in that person: but health and soundness is natural, as being the

well-being of nature, when the leprosy is unnatural, as being but its disease, and tending to its destruction.

Object. But nature in its first constitution was not holy, but innocent only, and it was by a superadded gift of grace that it became holy as some schoolmen think; and as others think, Adam had no holiness till his restoration.

Ans. These are popish unproved fancies, and contrary to nature and the word of God. 1. They are nowhere written, nor have no evidence in nature, and therefore are the groundless dreams of men.

2. The work of our recovery to God is called in scripture a redemption, renovation, restoration, which imply that nature was once in that holy estate before the fall. And it is expressly said, that the new man which we put on is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. Col. iii. 10. And after God's image Adam was created.

3. If it belong to the soundness and integrity of nature to be holy (that is, disposed and addicted to live to God) then it is an abusive temerity, for men out of their own imagination, to feign, that God first made nature defective, and then mended it by superadded grace. But if it belong not to the soundness and integrity of human nature to be holy, then why did God give him grace to make him so? Nay, then it would follow that when God sanctified Adam,

or any since, he made him specifically another thing, another creature, of another nature, and did not only cure the diseases of his nature.

4. It is yet apparent in the very nature of man's faculties, that their very usefulness and tendency, is to live to God, and to enjoy him: and that God should make a nature apt for such a use, and give it no disposedness to its proper use, is an unnatural conceit. We see to this day that it is but an unreasonable abuse of reason, when it is not used holily for God; and it is a very disease of nature to be otherwise disposed. Therefore primitive nature had such a holy inclination.

5. The contrary opinion tendeth to infidelity, and to brutify human nature. For if no man can believe that he must be holy and live to God, and enjoy him hereafter in heaven, but he that also believeth that primitive nature was never disposed or qualified for such a life; and that God must first make a man another creature in specie, of another nature (and consequently not a man), this is not only so improbable, but so contrary to scripture and reason, that few considerate persons would believe it: as if we must believe that God would turn brutes into men. God healeth, elevateth, and perfecteth nature, but doth not specifically change it, at least in this life.

Object. But let it be granted that he giveth not man specifically another nature, yet he may

give him such higher gifts, as may be like another nature to him so far.

Answ. No doubt he may and doth give him such gifts as actuate and perfect nature: but some disposition to our ultimate end is essential to our nature; and therefore to assign man another ultimate end, and to give a disposition to it, of which he had no seed, or part, or principle before, is to make him another creature. I confess that in lapsed man, the holy disposition is so far dead, as that the change maketh a man a new creature in a moral sense (as he is a new man that changeth his mind and manners): but still nature hath its aptitude as rational to be employed for its maker; so that he is not a new creature in a natural sense.

An actual or habitual willingness to this holy employment, a promptitude to it, and a due understanding of it, is the new creature morally so called which is given in our sanctification: but the natural aptitude that is in our faculties as rational, to this holy life, is essential to us as men, or as rational; even to have the *potentiam naturalem* which must yet have further help or moral life to actuate it. And Adam had both these: the one he retained, or else he had not continued a man; the other he lost, or else he had not had need of renovation.

6. If Adam's nature had not been disposed to God as to his end and sovereign, then the law of nature (to adhere to God, and obey and

serve him) was not written in his heart : and then it would not have been his duty to adhere to God, and to obey and serve him ; which is so false, that even in lapsed unrenewed nature, there is left so much aptitude hereto, as will prove him to be still under the obligations of this law of nature, even actually to adhere to God, and to obey him, which a dead man, a mad man, or an infant is not (immediately.)

By all this you see, that though the blindness and disease of reason is contrary to faith and holiness, yet reason itself is so much for it, as that faith itself is but the act of elevated well informed reason ; and supernatural revelation is but the means to inform our reason, about things which have not a natural evidence, discernible by us. And sanctification (actively taken) is but the healing of our reason and rational appetite : and holiness is but the health or soundness of them. The error of reason must be renounced by believers ; but not the use of reason : the sufficiency of reason and natural light without supernatural light and help, we must all deny : but to set reason as reason in opposition to faith or holiness, or divine revelation, is as gross a piece of foolery, as to set the visive faculty in opposition to the light of the sun, or to its objects. It is the unreasonableness of sinners that is to be cured by illuminating grace. They are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge. Their reason is wounded, depraved

and corrupted about the matters of God: they have reason to serve the flesh, but not to master it. God doth renew men by giving them wisdom, and bringing them to a sound mind. As logic helpeth reason in discourse and arguing, so theology informeth reason about the matters of God and our salvation; and the Spirit of God doth make his doctrine and revelation effectual. Make nature sound, and reason clear, and then we will consent that all men be persuaded to live according to their nature and their reason. But if a bedlam will rave and tear himself and others, and say, this is according to my nature or my reason; it is fitter that chains and whips do cure that nature and reason, than that he be allowed to live according to his madness. If a drunkard or whoremonger will say, my nature and reason incline me to please my appetite and lust, it is fit that the swinish nature be corrected, and the beast which rideth and ruleth the man, be taken down; and when indeed his nature is the nature of a man, and fitted to the use and ends that it was made for, then let him live according to it and spare not. If a malicious man will abuse or kill his neighbours, and say, this is according to my nature, let that nature be used as the nature of wolves and foxes, and other noxious creatures are. But let human nature be cured of its blindness, carnality and corruption, and then it will need no external testimony to convince it, that no employment is

so natural and suitable to man, as to walk with God, in love and confidence, and reverent worship, and cheerful obedience to his will. A worldly fleshly sensual life, will then appear to be below the rational nature of a man, as it is below us to go to grass with horses, or to live as mere companions of brutes. It will then appear to be as natural for us to love and live to our Creator and Redeemer, and to walk with God, as for a child to love his parents, and to live with them and serve them. When I say that this is natural, I mean not that it is necessary by natural necessity, or that grace doth operate *per modum naturæ*, as the irrational motion is so called. There is a brutish or inanimate nature, and there is a rational voluntary nature: grace worketh not according to the way of inanimate or brutish nature, but according to the way of rational nature, in free agents. I may well say that whatever is rational, is natural to a rational creature as such, so far as he discerneth it. Yea, and habits, though they effect not necessarily, but freely in a rational nature, yet they incline necessarily, and *per modum naturæ*. They contain in their being a natural aptitude and propensity to action.

Object. But thus you confound nature and grace, natural and supernatural operations, while you make grace natural.

Ans. No such matter: though walking with God be called natural, as it is most agreeable

to nature so far as it is sound, and is the felicity and meetest employment of the rational nature as such; yet 1. Diseased nature doth abhor it, as a diseased stomach the pleasantest and most wholesome food, (as I said before.) 2. And this disease of nature cannot be cured without divine supernatural grace: so that as to the efficient cause, our holiness is supernatural. But it is unsound doctrine of those that affirm that Adam in his pure natural state of innocency, had no natural holiness, or aptitude and promptitude to walk with God in order to everlasting happiness, but say that all this was either wanting to him, and was a state specifically distinct, which he fell short of by his sin, or that it was given him by superadded grace, and was not in his entire nature.

And yet we deny not but as to degrees, Adam's nature was to grow up to more perfection; and that his natural holiness contained not a sufficient immediate aptitude and promptitude to every duty which might afterward be required of him; but this was to be obtained in the exercise of that holiness which he had. Even as a vine or other fruit tree, though it be natural to it to bear its proper fruit, yet hath it not an immediate sufficient aptitude hereto, whilst it is but appearing out of the seed, before it be grown up to just maturity: or as it is natural to a man to discourse and reason; but yet his nature in infancy, or untaught and

unexercised, hath not a sufficient immediate aptitude and promptitude hereunto: or as grace inclineth a renewed soul to every holy truth and duty; and yet such a soul in its infancy of grace, hath not a sufficient immediate aptitude or promptitude to the receiving of every holy truth, or the doing of every holy duty, but must grow up to it by degrees. But the addition of these degrees, is no specific alteration of the nature of man, or of that grace which was before received.

Having been so long upon this first consideration (that walking with God is most agreeable to human nature), I shall be briefer in the rest that follow.

II. To walk with God and live to him, is incomparably the highest and noblest life. To converse with men only, is to converse with worms; whether they be princes or poor men, they differ but as the bigger vermin from the lesser: if they be wise and good, their converse may be profitable and delightful, because they have a beam of excellency from the face of God; (and O how unspeakable is the distance between his wisdom and goodness, and theirs!) but if they be foolish, ungodly and dishonest, how loathsome is their conversation! What stinking breath is in their profane and filthy language! in their lies and slanders of the just! in their sottish jeers and scorns of those that walk with God! which expose at once their

folly and misery to the pity of all that are truly understanding. When they are gravely speaking evil of the things which they understand not, or with a fleeing confidence deriding merrily the holy commands and ways of God, they are much more lamentably expressing their infatuation, than any that are kept in chains in bedlam: though indeed with the most they scape the reputation which they deserve, because they are attended with persons of their own proportion of wisdom, that always reverence a silken coat, and judge them wise that wear gold lace and have the greatest satisfaction of their wills and lusts, and are able to do most mischief in the world: and because good men have learnt to honor the worst of their superiors, and not to call them as they are. But God is bold to call them as they are, and give them in his word such names and characters by which they might come to know themselves. And is it not a higher, nobler life to walk with God, than to converse in bedlam, or with intoxicated sensualists, that live in a constant deliration?

Yea, worse than so. Ungodly men are children of the devil, so called by Jesus Christ himself, John viii. 44, because they have much of the nature of the devil, and the lusts of their father they will do; yea they are taken captive by him at his will. 2 Tim. ii. 26. They are the servants of sin, and do the drudgery that so vile a master sets them on. John viii. 34.

Certainly as the spirits of the just are so like to angels, that Christ saith, we shall be as they and equal to them; so the wicked are nearer kin to devils than they themselves will easily believe. They are as like him as children to their father. He is a liar, and so are they. He is a hater of God, and godliness, and godly men; and so are they. He is a murderer, and would fain devour the holy seed; and such are they. He envieth the progress of the gospel, and the prosperity of the church, and the increase of holiness; and so do they. He hath a special malice against the most powerful and successful preachers of the word of God, and against the most zealous and eminent saints; and so have they. He cares not by what lies and fictions he disgraceth them, nor how cruelly he useth them; no more do they (or some of them at least). He cherisheth licentiousness, sensuality, and impiety; and so do they. If they do seem better in their adversity and restraint, yet try them but with prosperity, and power, and you shall see quickly how like they are to devils. And shall we delight more to converse with brutes and incarnate devils, than with God? Is it not a more high and excellent conversation to walk with God, and live to him, than to be companions of such degenerate men, that have almost forfeited the reputation of humanity? Alas! they are companions so deluded and ignorant, and yet so wilful; so miserable, and yet so confident and

secure, that they are, to a believing eye, the most lamentable sight that the whole world can shew us out of hell. And how sad a life must it then needs be, to converse with such, were it not for the hope that we have of furthering their recovery and salvation!

But to walk with God is a word so high, that I should have feared the guilt of arrogance in using it, if I had not found it in the holy scriptures. It is a word that importeth so high and holy a frame of soul, and expresth such high and holy actions, that the naming of it striketh my heart with reverences, as if I had heard the voice to Moses, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." Exod. iii. 5. Methinks he that shall say to me, Come see a man that walks with God, doth call me to see one that is next unto an angel, or glorified soul! It is a far more reverend object in mine eye, than ten thousand lords or princes, considered only in their fleshly glory. It is a wiser action for people to run and crowd together to see a man that walks with God, than to see the pompous train of princes, their entertainments, or their triumphs. O happy man, that walks with God, though neglected and contemned by all about him! What blessed sights doth he daily see! What ravishing tidings, what pleasing melody doth he daily hear, unless it be in his swoons or sickness! What delectable food doth he

daily taste! He seeth by faith the God, the glory, which the blessed spirits see at hand by nearest intuition: he seeth that in a glass and darkly, which they behold with open face: he seeth the glorious majesty of his Creator, the eternal king, the cause of causes, the composer, upholder, preserver, and governor of all the worlds: he beholdeth the wonderful methods of his providence: and what he cannot reach to see, he admireth, and waiteth for the time when that also shall be open to his view! He seeth by faith the world of spirits, the hosts that attend the throne of God; their perfect righteousness, their full devotedness to God, their ardent love, their flaming zeal, their ready and cheerful obedience, their dignity and shining glory, in which the lowest of them exceedeth that which the disciples saw on Moses and Elias when they appeared on the holy mount, and talked with Christ. They hear by faith the heavenly concert, the high and harmonious songs of praise, the joyful triumphs of crowned saints, the sweet commemorations of the things that were done and suffered on earth, with the praises of him that redeemed them by his blood, and made them kings and priests to God. Herein he hath sometime a sweet foretaste of the everlasting pleasures, which though it be but little, as Jonathan's honey on the end of his rod, or as the clusters of grapes which were brought from Canaan into the wilderness, yet are they more

excellent than all the delights of sinners. And in the beholding of this celestial glory, some beams do penetrate his breast, and so irradiate his longing soul, that he is changed thereby into the same image from glory to glory; the spirit of glory and of God doth rest upon him; and O what an excellent holy frame doth this converse with God possess his soul of! How reverently doth he think of him! What life is there in every name and attribute of God which he heareth or thinketh on! The mention of his power, his wisdom, his goodness, his love, his holiness, his truth—how powerful and how pleasant are they to him! when to those that know him but by the hearing of the ear, all these are but like common names and notions: and even to the weaker sort of christians, whose walking with God is more uneven and low, interrupted by their sins, and doubts, and fears, this life and glory of a christian course is less perceived.

And the sweet appropriating and applying works of faith, by which the soul can own his God, and finds itself owned by him, are exercised most easily and happily in these near approaches unto God. Our doubts are cherished by our darkness, and that is much caused by our distance: the nearer the soul doth approach to God, the more distinctly it heareth the voice of mercy, the sweet reconciling invitations of love; and the more clearly it discerneth that goodness and amiableness in

God which maketh it easier to us to believe that he loveth us, or is ready to embrace us; and banisheth all those false and horrid apprehensions of him, which before were our discouragement, and made him seem to us more terrible than amiable. As the ministers and faithful servants of Christ are ordinarily so misrepresented by the malignant devil, to those that know them not, that they are ready to think them some silly fools, or falsehearted hypocrites, and to shun them as strange undesirable persons; but when they come to a thorough acquaintance with them by a nearer and familiar converse, they see how much they were mistaken, and wronged by their prejudice and belief of slanderers' misreports: even so a weak believer that is under troubles, in the apprehension of his sin and danger, is apt to hearken to the enemy of God, that would shew him nothing but his wrath, and represent God as an enemy to him: and in this case it is exceeding hard for a poor sinner to believe that God is reconciled to him, or loveth him, or intends him good; but he is ready to dread and shun him as an enemy, or as he would fly from a wild beast or murderer, or from fire or water that would destroy him: and all these injurious thoughts of God are cherished by strangeness and disacquaintance. But as the soul doth fall into an understanding and serious converse with God, and having been often with him doth find him more merciful than he was

by Satan represented to him, his experience reconcileth his mind to God, and maketh it much easier to him to believe that God is reconciled unto him, when he hath found much better entertainment with God than he expected, and hath observed his benignity, and the treasures of his bounty laid up in Christ, and by him distributed to believers, and hath found him ready to hear and help, and found him the only full and suitable felicitating good, this banisheth his former horrid thoughts, and maketh him ashamed that ever he should think so suspiciously, injuriously, and dishonorably of his dearest God and Father.

Yet I must confess that there are many upright troubled souls, that are much in reading, prayer, and meditation, that still find it hard to be persuaded of the love of God, and that have much more disquietment and fear since they set themselves to think of God than they had before: but yet, for all this, we may well conclude—that to walk with God is the way to consolation, and tendeth to acquaint us with his love. As for those troubled souls whose experience is objected against this, some of them are such as are yet but in their return to God, from a life of former sin and misery, and are yet but like the needle in the compass that is shaken, in a trembling motion towards their rest, and not in any settled apprehensions of it. Some of them by the straining of their imagination too high, and

putting themselves upon more than their heads can bear, and by the violence of fears or other passions, do make themselves incapable of those sweet consolations which else they might find in their converse with God; as a lute when the strings are broken with straining, is incapable of making any melody: all of them have false apprehensions of God, and therefore trouble themselves by their own mistakes. And if some perplex themselves by their error, doth it follow that therefore the truth is not comfortable? Is not a father's presence consolatory because some children are afraid of their fathers, that know them not because of some disguise? And some of God's children walk so unevenly and carelessly before him, that their sins provoke him to hide his face, and to seem to reject them and disown them, and so to trouble them that he may bring them home: but shall the comforts of our father's love and family be judged of by the fears or smart of those whom he is scourging for their disobedience, or their trial? Seek God with understanding, as knowing his essential properties, and what he will be to them that sincerely and diligently seek him, and then you will quickly have experience that nothing so much tendeth to quiet and settle a doubting troubled unstable soul, as faithfully to walk with God.

But the soul that estrangeth itself from God, may indeed for a time have the quietness of

security; but (so far) it will be strange to the assurance of his love, and to true consolation. Expect not that God should follow with his comforts in your sinfulness and negligence, and cast them into your hearts whilst you neither seek nor mind them, or that he give you the fruit of his ways in your own ways. Will he be your joy when you forget him? will he delight your souls with his goodness and amiableness, while you are taken up with other matters, and think not of him? can you expect to find the comforts of his family, among his enemies, out of doors? The experience of all the world can tell you, that prodigals while they are straggling from their Father's house, do never taste the comfort of his embraces; the strangers meddle not with his children's joys: they grow not in the way of ambition, covetousness, vainglory, or sensuality; but in the way of holy obedience, and of believing contemplations of the divine everlasting objects of delight. For, lo, they that are far from him shall perish: he destroyeth them that go a whoring from him: but it is good for us to draw nigh to God. Ps. lxxiii. 27, 28.

III. Walking with God, is the only course that can prove and make men truly wise. It proves them wise that make so wise and good a choice, and are disposed and skilled in any measure for so high a work. Practical wisdom is the solid, useful, profitable wisdom: and

practical wisdom is seen in our choice of good, and refusal of evil, as its most immediate and excellent effect. And no choosing or refusing doth shew the wisdom or folly of man so much as that which is about the greatest matters, and which everlasting life or death depends on. He is not thought so wise among men that can write a volume about the orthography or etymology of a word, or that can guess what wood the Trojan horse was made of, or that can make a chain to tie a flea in, as he that can bring home gold and pearls, or he that can obtain and manage governments, or he that can cure mortal maladies : for as in lading we difference bulk and value, and take not that for the best commodity which is of greatest quantity or weight, but that which is most precious and of greatest use : so there is a bulky knowledge, extended far, to a multitude of words and things, which are all of no great use or value ; and therefore the knowledge of them is such as they : and there is a precious sort of knowledge, which fixeth upon the most precious things ; which being of greatest use and value, do accordingly prove the knowledge such. Nothing will prove a man simply and properly wise, but that which will prove or make him happy. He is wise indeed, that is wise to his own and others' good : and that is indeed his good, which saveth his soul, and maketh him for ever blessed. Though we may admire the cunning of those that can

make the most curious engines, or by deceiving others advance themselves, or that can subtly dispute the most curious niceties, or criticise upon the words of several languages; yet I will never call them wise, that are all that while the devil's slaves, the enemies of God, the refusers of grace, and are making haste to endless misery: and I think there is not one of those in hell who were once the subtle men on earth, that now take themselves to have been truly wise, or glory much in the remembrance of such wisdom.

And as this choice doth prove men wise, so the practice of this holy walking with God doth make them much wiser than they were. As there must be some work of the Spirit to draw men to believe in Christ, and yet the Spirit is promised and given (in a special sort or measure) to them that do believe; so must there be some special wisdom to make men choose to walk with God; but much more is given to them in this holy course. As Solomon was wiser than most of the world, before he asked wisdom of God, or else he would not have made so wise a choice, and preferred wisdom before the riches and honors of the world; and yet it was a more notable degree of wisdom that was afterwards given him in answer to his prayer: so it is in this case.

There are many undeniable evidences to prove, that walking with God doth do more to make

men truly wise, than all other learning or policy in the world.

1. He that walketh with God, doth begin aright, and settle upon a sure foundation; (and we use to say, that a work is half finished that is well begun.) He hath engaged himself to the best and wisest teacher; he is a disciple to him that knoweth all things; he hath taken in infallible principles, and taken them in their proper place and order; he hath learnt those truths which will every one become a teacher to him, and help him to that which is yet unlearnt: whereas many that thought they were doctors in Israel, if ever they will be wise and happy, must become fools, (that is, such as they have esteemed fools) if ever they will be wise, 1 Cor. iii. 18, and must be called back with Nicodemus to learn Christ's cross, and to be taught that that which is born of the flesh is but flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit; and that therefore they must be born again (not only of water, but also of the Spirit), if ever they will enter into the kingdom of heaven. John iii. 3, 5, 6. O miserable beginning! and miserable progress! when men that never soundly learnt the mysteries of regeneration, and faith, and love, and self-denial, and mortification, do proceed to study names and words, and to turn over a multitude of books, to fill their brains with airy notions, and their common-places with such sayings as may be provision

and furniture for their pride and ostentation, and ornament to their style and language; and know not yet what they must do to be saved, and indeed know nothing as they ought to know! 1 Cor. viii. 2. As every science hath its principles, which are supposed in all the consequential varieties; so hath religion as doctrinal and practical, those truths which must be first received before any other can be received as it ought; and those things which must be first done, before any other can be done so as to attain their ends. And these truths and duties are principally about God himself, and are known and done effectually by those, and only those, that walk with God, or are devoted to him. It is a lamentable thing to see men immersed in serious studies, even till they grow aged, and to hear them seriously disputing and discoursing about the controversies or difficulties in theology, or inferior sciences, before ever they had any saving knowledge of God, or of the work of the Holy Ghost in the converting and sanctifying of the soul, or how to escape everlasting misery!

2. He that walketh with God, hath fixed upon a right end, and is renewing his estimation and intention of it, and daily prosecuting it: and this is the first and greatest part of practical wisdom. When a man once knoweth his end aright, he may the better judge of the aptitude and seasonableness of all the means. When

we know once that heaven containeth the only felicity of man, it will direct us to heavenly cogitations, and to such spiritual means as are fitted to that end: if we have the right mark in our eye, we are liker to level at it than if we mistake our mark. He is the wise man, and only he, that hath steadily fixed his eye upon that blessedness which he was created and redeemed for, and maketh straight towards it, and bends the powers of soul and body, by faithful constant diligence to obtain it. He that hath rightly and resolvedly determined of his end, hath virtually resolved a thousand controversies that others are unsatisfied and erroneous in. He that is resolved, that his end is to please and glorify God, and to enjoy him for ever, is easily resolved whether a holy life, or a sensual and worldly, be the way: whether the way be to be godly, or to make a mock at godliness: whether covetousness and riches, ambition and preferment, voluptuousness and fleshly pleasures, be the means to attain his end: whether it will be attained rather by the studying of the word of God, and meditating on it day and night, and by holy conference, and fervent prayer, and an obedient life; or by negligence, or worldliness, or drunkenness, or gluttony, or cards and dice, or beastly filthiness, or injustice and deceit. Know once but whither it is that we are going, and it is easy to know whether the saint, or the swine, or the swaggerer be in the

way. But a man that doth mistake his end, is out of his way at the first step; and the further he goes, the further he is from true felicity; and the more he erreth, and the further he hath to go back again, if ever he return. Every thing that a man doth in the world, which is not for the right end, (the heavenly felicity) is an act of foolishness and error, how splendid soever the matter or the name may make it appear to ignorant men. Every word that an ungodly person speaketh being not for a right end, is in him but sin and folly, however materially it may be an excellent and useful truth. While a miserable soul hath his back upon God, and his face upon the world, every step he goeth is an act of folly, as tending unto his further misery. It can be no act of wisdom, which tendeth to a man's damnation. When such a wretch begins to enquire and bethink him where he is, and whither he is going, and whither he should go, and to think of turning back to God, then and never till then he is beginning to come to himself, and to be wise. Luke xv. 17. Till God and glory be the end that he aimeth at, and seriously bends his study, heart and life to seek, though a man were searching into the mysteries of nature, though he were studying or discussing the notions of theology, though he were admired for his learning and wisdom by the world, and cried up as the oracle of the earth, he is all the while but playing the fool, and going a cleanlier way to

hell than the grosser sinners of the world! For is he wise, that knoweth not whether heaven or earth be better? whether God or his flesh should be obeyed? whether everlasting joys, or the transitory pleasures of sin, should be preferred? or that seemeth to be convinced of the truth in these and such like cases, and yet hath not the wit to make his choice, and bend his life according to his conviction? He cannot be wise that practically mistakes his end.

3. He that walketh with God, doth know those things, with a deep, effectual, heart-changing knowledge, which other men know but superficially, by the halves, and as in a dream. And true wisdom consisteth in the intensiveness of the knowledge subjectively, as much as in the extensiveness of it objectively. To see a few things in a narrow room perspicuously and clearly, doth shew a better eye-sight, than in the open air to see many things obscurely so as scarce to discern any of them aright; (like him that saw men walk like trees). The clearness and depth of knowledge, which makes it effectual to its proper use, is the greatness and excellency of it: therefore it is that unlearned men that love and fear the Lord, may well be said to be incomparably more wise and knowing men, than the most learned that are ungodly. As he hath more riches that hath a little gold or jewels, than he that hath many load of stones: so he that hath a deep effectual knowledge of

God the Father, and the Redeemer, and of the life to come, is wiser and more knowing than he that hath only a notional knowledge of the same things, and of a thousand more. A wicked man hath so much knowledge as teacheth him to speak the same words of God, and Christ, and heaven, which a true believer speaks; but not so much as to work in him the same affections and choice, nor so much as to cause him to do the same work. As it is a far more excellent kind of knowledge which a man hath of any country by travel and habitation there, than that which cometh but by reading or report; or which a man hath of meat, of fruits, of wine, by eating and drinking, than that which another hath by hearsay; so is the inward heart-affecting knowledge of a true believer more excellent than the flashy notions of the ungodly. Truth, simply as truth, is not the highest and most excellent object of the mind: but good, as good, must be apprehended by the understanding, and commended to the will, which entertaineth it with complacency, adhereth to it with choice and resolution, prosecuteth it with desire and endeavour, and enjoyeth it with delight: and though it be the understanding which apprehendeth it, yet it is the heart or will that relisheth it, and tasteth the greatest sweetness in it, working upon it with some mixture of internal sense (which hath made some ascribe a knowledge of good as such unto the will); and it is

the will's intention that causeth the understanding to be denominated practical: and therefore I may well say that it is wisdom indeed when it reacheth to the heart. No man knoweth the truth of God so well as he that most firmly believeth him; and no man knoweth the goodness of God so well as he that loveth him most: no man knoweth his power and mercy so well as he that doth most confidently trust him; and no man knoweth his justice and dreadfulness so well as he that feareth him: no man knoweth or believeth the glory of heaven so well as he that most esteemeth, desireth, and seeketh it, and hath the most heavenly heart and conversation: no man believeth in Jesus Christ so well as he that giveth up himself unto him, with the greatest love and thankfulness, and trust and obedience. As James saith,—Shew me thy faith by thy works, so say I, Let me know the measure and value of my knowledge by my heart and life. That is wisdom indeed which conformeth a man to God, and saveth his soul: this only will be owned as wisdom to eternity, when dreaming notions will prove but folly.

4. He that walketh with God hath an infallible rule, and taketh the right course to have the best acquaintance with it, and skill to use it. The doctrine that informeth him is divine: it is from heaven, and not of men: and therefore if God be wiser than man, he is able to make his disciples wisest; and his teaching will

more certainly and powerfully illuminate. Many among men have pretended to infallibility, that never could justify their pretensions, but have confuted them by their own mistakes and crimes : but none can deny the infallibility of God. He never yet was deceived, or did deceive : he erreth not, nor teacheth error. Nicodemus knew Christ was to be believed, when he knew that he was a teacher come from God. John iii. 2. Christ knew that the Jews themselves durst not deny the truths of John's doctrine, if he could but convince them that it was " from heaven, and not of men." It is impossible for God to lie: it is the devil that was a liar from the beginning, and is yet the father of lies : no wonder if they believe lies that follow such a teacher. And those that follow the flesh and the world, do follow the devil: they that will believe what their fleshly interest and lusts persuade them to believe, do believe what the devil persuadeth them to believe ; for he persuadeth them by these, and for these. What marvel then if there be found men in the world, that can believe that holiness is hypocrisy, or a needless thing ; that those are the worst men that are most careful to please God ; that the world is more worthy of their care and labor, than their salvation is ; that the pleasures of sin for a season are more desirable, than the everlasting happiness of the saints ; that cards and dice, and mirth and lust, and wealth and honor,

are matters more delectable, than prayer, and meditating on the word of God, and loving him, and obeying him, and waiting in the hopes of life eternal; that gluttons and drunkards, and whoremongers, and covetous persons, may enter into the kingdom of God, &c. What wonder if a thousand such damnable lies, are believed by the disciples of the father of lies! what wonder if there are so many saint-haters, and God-haters in the world, as to fill the earth with persecutions and cruelties, or make a scorn of that which God most highly valueth; and all this under pretences of order, or unity, or justice, or something that is good, and therefore fit to palliate their sin! Is there any thing so false, or foul, or wicked, that Satan will not teach his followers? Is he grown modest, or moderate, or holy, or just? Is he reconciled to Christ, to scripture, to godliness, or to the godly? Or is his kingdom of darkness at an end? and hath he lost the earth? Or are men therefore none of the servants of the devil, because they were baptised (as Simon Magus was) and call and think themselves the servants of Christ? As if still it were not the art by which he gets and keeps disciples, to suffer them to wear the livery of Christ, and to use his name, that he may thus keep possession of them in peace, who else would be frighted from him, and fly to Christ! He will give them leave to study arts and sciences, and to understand things excellent of

inferior use, so be it they will be deceived by him in the matters of God and their salvation: he can allow them to be learned lawyers, excellent physicians, philosophers, politicians, to be skilful artists, so be it they will follow him in sin to their damnation, and will overlook the truth that should set them free: John viii. 32. yea, he will permit them (when there is no remedy) to study the holy scriptures, if he may but be the expounder and applier of it; yea, he will permit them notionally to understand it, if they will not learn by it to be converted, to be holy, and to be saved: he can suffer them to be eminent divines, so they will not be serious christians. Thus is the world by the grand deceiver hurried in darkness to perdition, being taken captive by him at his will. 2 Tim. ii. 26. But the sanctified are all illuminated by the Holy Ghost, by whom their eyes are so effectually opened, that they are turned from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Acts xxvi. 18. The Father of glory hath given them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of Christ, that the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. Eph. i. 17, 18. Certainly that illumination of the Holy Ghost which is so often mentioned in scripture as given to all true believers, is not a fancy, nor an insignificant

name: and if it signify any thing, it signifieth somewhat that is much above the teaching of man. All that walk with God are taught of God! And can man teach like God? God hath access unto the heart, and there he doth transcribe his laws, and put them into our inward parts: and they that walk with him have not only his word to read, but his Spirit to help them to understand it; and being with him in his family (yea, he dwelleth in them and they in him) he is ready at hand to resolve their doubts! When he gave them his fear, he gave them the beginning of wisdom. Ps. cxi. 10. He causeth them to incline their ear to wisdom, Prov. ii. 2, and to apply their hearts unto it, Ps. xc. 12, and maketh them to know it in the hidden parts. Ps. li. 6.

It is his law that they have determined to make their rule: they live as under his authority: they are more observant of his will and government, than of any laws or government of man: and as they obey man in and for the Lord, so they do it in subordination to him, and therefore not against him and his laws, which being the standard of justice, and the rule of rulers, and of subjects both, they are in the safest way of unerring wisdom, who walk with God according to that rule, and refuse to turn aside, though commanded by man, or enticed by Satan, the world, or flesh.

5. He that walketh with God is the most

considerate person, and therefore hath great advantage to be wise: the frequent and serious thoughts of God, do awaken all the powers of the soul, so that drowsiness doth not hinder the understanding, and so occasion its deceit. There is scarce a more common and powerful cause of men's folly and delusion and perdition, in all the world, than that sleepiness and stupidity which hindereth reason from the vigorous performance of its office. In this senseless case, though a man both know and consider of the same truths, which in their nature are most powerful to cleanse and govern and save his soul, yet sluggishness doth enervate them; he knoweth them as if he knew them not, and considereth them as if he never thought of them; they work little more upon him, than if he believed them not, or had never heard of them; even as a dream of the greatest matters, moveth not the sleeper from his pillow. In this senseless state, the devil can do almost any thing with a sinner; he can make him sin against his knowledge; and when conscience hath frightened him into some kind of penitence, and made him cry out, I have sinned and done foolishly, and caused him to promise to do so no more; yet doth the devil prevail with him to go on, and to break his promises, as if he had never been convinced of his sins, or confessed them, or seen any reason or necessity to amend; he doth but imprison the truth in

unrighteousness, and bury it in a senseless heart: whereas if you could but awaken all the powers of his soul, to give this same truth its due entertainment, and take it deeper into his heart, it would make him even scorn the baits of sin, and see that the ungodly are beside themselves, and make him presently resolve and set upon a holy life. And hence it is that sickness which causeth men to receive the sentence of death, doth usually make men bewail their former sinful lives, and marvel that they could be before so sottish as to resist such known and weighty truths: and it makes them purpose and promise reformation, and wish themselves in the case of those that they were wont before to deride and scorn; because now the truth is deeplier received and digested by their awakened souls, and appeareth in its proper evidence and strength. There is no man but must acknowledge, that the same truth doth at one time command his soul, which at another time seems of little force: it is a wonder to observe how differently the same consideration worketh with a man when he is awakened, and when he is in a secure stupid case!

Now this is his advantage that walks with God.—He is much more frequently than others awakened to a serious apprehension of the things which he understandeth: the thoughts of the presence of the most holy God, will not suffer him to be as secure and senseless as others

are, or as he is himself when he turneth aside from this heavenly conversation. He hath in God such exceeding transcendent excellencies, such greatness, such goodness continually to behold, that it keepeth his soul in a much more serious lively state, than any other means could keep it in: so that whenever any truth or duty is presented to him, all his faculties are awake and ready to observe it and improve it. A sermon, or a good book, or godly conference, or a mercy, when a man hath been with God in prayer or contemplation, will relish better with him, and sink much deeper, than at another time. Nay, one serious thought of God himself will do more to make a man truly and solidly wise than all the reading and learning in the world, which shuts him out.

6. Walking with God doth fix the mind, and keep it from diversions and vagaries, and consequently much helpeth to make men wise. A straggling mind is empty and unfurnished. He that hath no dwelling, for the most part hath no wealth. Wandering is the beggar's life. Men do but bewilder and lose themselves, and not grow wise, whose thoughts are ranging in the corners of the earth, and are like masterless dogs, that run up and down according to their fancy, and may go any whither, but have business nowhere. The creature will not fix the soul; but God is the centre of all our cogitations: in him only they may unite, and fix, and

rest. He is the only loadstone that can effectually attract and hold it steadfast to himself: therefore he that walks with God is the most constant and unmoveable of men. Let prosperity or adversity come; let the world be turned upside down, and the mountains be hurled into the sea, yet he changeth not. Let men allure or threat, let them scorn or rage, let laws, and customs, and governments, and interest change, he is still the same: for he knoweth that God is still the same, and that his word changeth not. Let that be death one year which was the way to reputation another, and let the giddy world turn about as the seasons of the year, this changeth not his mind and life (though in things lawful he is of a yielding temper): for he knoweth that the interest of his soul doth not change with the humors or interests of men. He still feareth sinning, for he knoweth that judgment is still drawing on, in all changes and seasons whatsoever. He is still set upon the pleasing of the most holy God, whoever be uppermost among men; as knowing that the God whom he serveth is able to deliver him from man, but man is not able to deliver him from God. He still goeth on in the holy path, as knowing that heaven is as sure and as desirable as ever it was. Ps. cxii. 6—8. "Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed,

trusting in the Lord. His heart is established, he shall not be afraid.”

7. He that walketh with God hath the great master-truths upon his heart, which are the standard of the rest, and the stock, as it were, out of which they spring. The great truths about God, and grace, and glory, have a greater power than many hundred truths of an inferior nature. And moreover, such a one is sure that he shall be wise in the greatest and most necessary points. He is guilty of no ignorance or error that shall keep him out of heaven, or hinder his acceptance with his God. And if he be wise enough to please God and to be saved, he is wise indeed: (as before was hinted.)

8. Walking with God doth take off the visor of deluding things, and keepeth us out of the reach and power of those objects and arguments which are the instruments of deceit. When a man hath been believingly and seriously with God, how easily can he see through the sophistry of the tempting world! How easily can he practically confute the reasonings of the flesh; and discern the dotage of the seeming subtleties of wicked men, that will needs think they have reason for that which is displeasing to their maker, and tends to the damning of their souls! So far as a man is conversant with God, so far he is sensible, that all things are nothing, which can be offered as a price to hire him to sin: and that the name of preferment, and honor and

wealth, or of disgrace and imprisonment and death, are words almost of no signification, as to the tempter's ends, to draw the soul from God and duty. It is men that know not God, and know not what it is to walk with him, that think these words so big and powerful, to whom wealth and honor signify more than God and heaven; and poverty, disgrace and death, do signify more than God's displeasure and everlasting punishment in hell. As it is easy to cheat a man that is far from the light, so is it easy to deceive the learnedst man that is far from God.

9. Walking with God, doth greatly help us against the deceitfulness and erroneous disposition of our own hearts. The will hath a very great power upon the understanding: and therefore ungodly fleshly men will very hardly receive any truth which crosseth the carnal interest or disposition; and will hardly let go any error that feedeth them, because their corrupted wills are a bias to their understandings, and make them desperately partial in all their reading and hearing, and hypocritical in their prayers and enquiries after truth: interest and corruption locketh up their hearts from their own observation. Whereas a man that walketh with God, that is jealous, and holy, and just, and a searcher of the heart, is driven from hypocrisy, and forced to behave himself as in the open light, and to do all as in the sight of all the world, as knowing

that the sight of God is of far greater concernment and regard. The partiality, corruption and bias of the heart, is detected and shamed by the presence of God: therefore to walk with God is to walk in the light, and as children of the light, and not in darkness. And he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds might be manifest, that they are wrought in God: when every one that doth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved: and this is their condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men love the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil. John iii. 19—21. It tendeth therefore exceedingly to make men wise, to walk with God, because it is a walking in the light, and in such a presence as most powerfully prevaieth against that hypocrisy, deceitfulness, and partiality of the heart, which is the common cause of damning error.

10. Lastly, they that walk with God are entitled by many promises, to the guidance and direction of his Spirit. And blessed are those that have such a guide: at once a light in the world without them, and a light immediately from God within them: for so far as he is received and worketh in them, he will lead them into truth, and save them from deceit and folly; and having guided them by his counsel, will afterward take them unto glory. Ps. lxxiii. 24. Whereas the ungodly are led by the flesh, and

often given up to their own hearts' lusts, to walk in their own counsels, Rom. viii. 1—13. Ps. lxxxi. 12, till at last the fools do say in their hearts, there is no God, Ps. xiv. 1. and they become corrupt and abominable, eating up the people of the Lord as bread, and call not on his name, ver. 2. &c. deceiving and being deceived: sensual, having not the Spirit, Jude 19. who shall receive the reward of their unrighteousness, as accounting it pleasure to riot in the day time. 2 Pet. ii. 13.

IV. Another benefit of walking with God, is, that it maketh men good, as well as wise: it is the most excellent means for the advancement of man's soul to the highest degree of holiness attainable in this life. If conversing with good men doth powerfully tend to make men good; conversing with God must needs be more effectual; which may appear in these particulars.

1. The apprehensions of the presence and attributes of God, do most effectually check the stirrings of corruption, and rebuke all the vicious inclinations and motions of the soul: even the most secret sin of the heart, is rebuked by his presence, as well as the most open transgression of the life: for the thoughts of the heart are open to his view. All that is done before God, is done as in the open light: nothing of it can be hid: no sin can have the encouragement of secrecy to embolden it: it is all committed in the presence of the universal king and lawgiver

of the world, who hath forbidden it: it is done before him that most abhorreth it, and will never be reconciled to it: it is done before him that is the judge of the world, and will shortly pass the sentence on us according to what we have done in the body: it standeth up in his presence who is of infinite majesty and perfection, and therefore most to be revered and honored; and therefore if the presence of a wise and grave and venerable person will restrain men from sin, the presence of God apprehended seriously, will do it much more: it is committed before him that is our dearest friend, and tender father, and chiefest benefactor; and therefore ingenuity, gratitude and love, will all rise up against it in those that walk with God. There is that in God, before the eyes of those that walk with him, which is most contrary to sin, and most powerful against it, of any thing in the world. Every one will confess that if men's eyes were opened to see the Lord in glory standing over them, it would be the most powerful means to restrain them from transgressing: the drunkard would not then venture upon his cups; the fornicator would have a cooling for his lusts; the swearer would be afraid to take his maker's name in vain; the profane would scarce presume to scorn or persecute a holy life. And he that walketh with God, though he see him not corporeally, yet seeth him by faith, and liveth as in his presence; and therefore must needs be

restrained from sin, as having the means which is next to the sight of God. If pride should begin to stir in one that walks with God, O what a powerful remedy is at hand! how effectually would the presence of the great and holy God rebuke it, and constrain us to say, as Job, xlii. 5, 6. "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee: wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes." If worldly love or carnal lust should stir in such a one, how powerfully would the terrors of the Lord repress it, and his majesty rebuke it, and his love and goodness overcome it! If worldly cares or murmuring discontents begin to trouble such a one, how effectually will the goodness, the all-sufficiency, and the faithfulness of God allay them, and quiet and satisfy the soul, and cause it to be offended at its own offence, and to chide itself for its ripenings and distrust! If passion arise and begin to decompose us, how powerfully will the presence of God rebuke it! and the reverence of his majesty, and the sense of his authority and pardoning grace will assuage it, and shame us into silent quietness. Who dare let out his passions upon man in the presence of his maker, that apprehendeth his presence? The same I might say of all other sins.

2. The presence and attributes of God apprehended by those that walk with him, is the potent remedy against temptations. Who will

once turn an eye to the gold and glory of the world that is offered him to allure him to sin, if he see God stand by? Who would be tempted to lust, or any sinful pleasure, if he observe the presence of the Lord? Satan can never come in so ill a time with his temptations, and have so little hope to speed, as when the soul is contemplating the attributes of God, or taken up in prayer with him, or any way apprehensive of his presence. The soul that faithfully walks with God, hath enough at hand in him to answer all temptations: and the further any man is from God, and the less he knoweth him, the more temptations can do upon him.

3. The presence of God, affordeth the most powerful motives unto good, to those that walk with him. There is no grace in man, but what is from God, and may find in God its proper object or incentive. As God is God, above the creature transcendently and infinitely in all perfections, so all the motives to goodness which are fetched from him, are transcendently above all that may be fetched from any creature. He that liveth always by the fire or in the sunshine, is likest to be warm: he that is most with God, will be most like to God in holiness: frequent and serious converse with him, doth most deeply imprint his communicable attributes on the heart, and make there the clearest impression of his image. Believers have learned by their own experience, that one hour's serious

prayer or meditation, in which they can get nigh to God in the Spirit, doth more advance their grace, than any help that the creature can afford them.

4. Moreover, those that walk with God, have not only a powerful, but an universal incentive for the actuating and increasing of every grace. Knowledge, and faith, and fear, and love, and trust, and hope, and obedience, and zeal, and all have in God their proper objects and incentives: one creature may be useful to us in one thing, and another in another thing; but God is the most effectual mover of all his graces; and that in a holy harmony and order. Indeed he hath no greater motive to draw us to love him, and fear him, and trust him, and obey him, than himself. It is life eternal to know him in his Son, John xvii. 3; and that is, not only because it entitleth us to life eternal, but also because it is the beginning and incentive of that life of holiness which will be eternal.

5. Moreover, those that walk with God, have a constant as well as a powerful and universal incentive to exercise and increase their graces. Other helps may be out of the way; their preachers may be silenced or removed; their friends may be scattered or taken from them; their books may be forbidden, or not at hand; but God is always ready and willing: they have leave at all times to come to him, and be welcome. Whenever they are willing they may go

to him by prayer or contemplation, and find all in him which they can desire. If they want not hearts, they shall find no want of any thing in God. At what time soever fear would torment them, they may draw near and put their trust in him. Ps. lvi. 2—4. xi. 1. xviii. 2, 30. xxxi. 1, 6. He will be a sure and speedy refuge for them, a very present help in trouble. Ps. xlvi. 1. lxii. 7, 8. xci. 2, 9. xciv. 22. Whenever coldness or lukewarmness would extinguish the work of grace, they may go to him, and find those streams of flaming love flow from him, those strong attractives, those wonderful mercies, those terrible judgments, of which while they are musing, the fire may again wax hot within them. Ps. xxxix. iii.

6. Lastly, by way of encouraging reward, God useth to give abundantly of his grace, to those that walk most faithfully with him: he will shew most love to those that most love him; he will be nearest to them that most desirously draw nigh to him; while he forsaketh those that forsake him, and turneth away from those that turn away from him. 2 Chron. xv. 2. Prov. i. 32. Ezra viii. 22. "The hand of our God is for good upon all them that seek him: but his power and his wrath is against all them that forsake him."

Thus it is apparent in all those evidences, that walking with God, is not only a discovery of the goodness that men have, but the only way to

increase their grace, and make them better. O what a sweet humility and seriousness, and spirituality appeareth in the conference, or conversation, or both, of those that newly come from a believing close converse with God; when they that come from men and books, may have but a common mind or life: and those that come from the business and pleasure of the world and flesh, and from the company of foolish riotous gallants, may come defiled, as the swine out of the mire!

V. Lastly, to walk with God, is the best preparation for times of suffering, and for the day of death. As we must be judged according to what we have done in the body; so the nearer we find ourselves to judgment, the more we shall be constrained to judge ourselves according to what we have done, and shall the more perceive the effects upon our souls.

That this is so excellent a preparative for sufferings and death, will appear by the consideration of these particulars.

1. They that walk with God are safest from all destructive sufferings; and shall have none but what are sanctified to their good. Rom. viii. 28. They are near to God, where destruction cometh not; as the chicken under the wings of the hen. They walk with him that will not lead them to perdition: that will not neglect them, nor sell them for nought, nor expose them to the will of men and devils, though he may suffer

them to be tried for their good. No one can take them out of his hands. Be near to him, and you are safe: the destroyer cannot fetch you thence. He can fetch you (when the time is come) from the side of your merriest companions, and dearest friends; from the presence of the greatest princes; from the strongest tower, or most sumptuous palace, or from your heaps of riches, in your securest health: but he cannot take you from the arms of Christ, nor from under the wings of your Creator's love. For there is no God like him, in heaven above, or on the earth beneath, who keepeth covenant and mercy with his servants, that walk before him with all their heart. 1 Kings viii. 23. xi. 38. However we are used in our Father's presence, we are sure it shall be for good in the latter end: for he wanteth neither power nor love to deliver us, if he saw deliverance to be best.

2. Walking with God is the surest way to obtain a certainty of his special love, and of our salvation: and what an excellent preparative for sufferings or death such assurance is, I need not tell any considerate believer. How easy may it be to us to suffer poverty, disgrace, or wrongs, or the pains of sickness or death, when once we are certain that we shall not suffer the pains of hell? How cheerfully may we go out of this troublesome world, and leave the greatest prosperity behind us, when we are sure to live in heaven for ever! Even an infidel will say,

that he could suffer or die, if he could but be certain to be glorified in heaven when he is dead.

3. Walking with God doth mortify the flesh, and allay the affections and lusts thereof. The soul that is taken up with higher matters, and daily seeth things more excellent, becometh as dead to the things below: and thus it weaneth us from all that is in the world which seemeth most desirable to carnal men. And when the flesh is mortified, and the world is nothing to us, or but as a dead and loathsome carcase, what is there left to be very troublesome in any suffering from the world; or to make us loath by death to leave it? It is men that know not God, that overvalue the profits and honors of the world; and men that never felt the comforts of communion with God, that set too much by the pleasures of the flesh: and it is men that set too much by these, that make so great a matter of suffering. It is he that basely overvalueth wealth, that whineth and repineth when he comes to poverty: it is he that set too much by his honor, and being befooled by his pride, doth greatly esteem the thoughts or applauding words of men, that swelleth against those that disesteem him, and breaketh his heart when he falleth into disgrace. He that is cheated out of his wits by the pomps and splendour of a high and prosperous estate, doth think he is undone when he is brought low. But it is not so with him that walks with God: for being taken up

with far higher things, he knoweth the vanity of these: as he seeth not in them any thing that is worthy of his strong desires, so neither any thing that is worthy of much lamentation when they are gone. He never thought that a shadow or feather, or a blast of wind could make him happy: and he cannot think that the loss of these can make him miserable. He that is taken up with God hath a higher interest and business, and findeth not himself so much concerned in the storms or calms that are here below, as others are, who know no better, and never minded higher things.

4. Walking with God doth much overcome the fear of man. The fear of him that can destroy both soul and body in hell fire, will extinguish the fear of them that can but kill the body. Luke xii. 4. The threats or frowns of a worm are inconsiderable to him that daily walketh with the great and dreadful God, and hath his power and word for his security. As Moses esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, because he had respect to the recompense of reward; so he feared not the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him that is invisible. Heb. xi. 27.

5. Walking with God doth much prepare for sufferings and death, in that it breedeth quietness in the conscience: so that when all is at peace within, it will be easy to suffer any thing from without. Though there is no proper merit

in our works to comfort us, yet it is an unspeakable consolation to a slandered persecuted man to be able to say, These evil sayings are spoken falsely of me, for the sake of Christ; and I suffer not as an evil doer, but as a christian: and it is matter of very great peace to a man that is hasting unto death, to be able to say as Hezekiah, 2 Kings xx. 3, “ Remember now, O Lord, how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart, and have done that which is good in thy sight:” and as Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8, “ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,” &c. and as 2 Cor. i. 12, “ For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world:” such a testimony of conscience is a precious cordial to a suffering or a dying man. The time that we have spent in a holy and heavenly conversation, will be exceeding sweet in the last review, when time spent in sinful vanity, and idleness, and in worldly and fleshly designs, will be grievous and tormenting. The day is coming, and is even at hand, when those that are now the most hardened infidels, or obstinate presumptuous sinners, or scornful malicious enemies of holiness, would wish and wish a thousand times, that they had spent that

life in a serious obedient walking with God, which they spent in seeking worldly wealth, and laying up a treasure on earth, and feeding the inordinate desires of their flesh. I tell you it is walking with God, that is the only way to have a sound and quiet conscience: and he that is healing and settling his conscience upon the love of God and the grace of Christ, in the time of his prosperity, is making the wisest preparation for adversity: and the preparation thus made so long before (perhaps twenty, or forty, or threescore years or more) is as truly useful and comfortable at a dying hour, as that part which is made immediately before. I know that besides this general preparation, there should be also a particular special preparation, for sufferings and death: but yet this general part is the chiefest and most necessary part. A man that hath walked in his lifetime with God, shall certainly be saved, though death surprize him unexpectedly, without any more particular preparation: but a particular preparation, without either such a life or such a heart as would cause it if he had recovered, is no sufficient preparation at all, and will not serve to any man's salvation. Alas! what a pitiful provision doth that man make for death and for salvation, who neglecteth his soul, despiseth the commands of God, and disregardeth the promises of eternal life, till he is ready to die, and then crieth out ' I repent, I am sorry for my sin, I would I

had lived better,' and this only from the constraint of fear, without any such love to God and holiness which would make him walk with God if he should recover! What if the priest absolve this man from all his sins? Doth God therefore absolve him? or shall he thus be saved? No, it is certain that all the sacraments and absolution in the world, will never serve to save such a soul, without that grace which must make it new and truly holy. The absolution of a minister of Christ, which is pronounced in his name, is a very great comfort to the truly penitent: for such God hath first pardoned by his general act of oblivion in the gospel, and it is God that sendeth his messenger to them (in sacraments and ministerial absolution) with that pardon particularized and applied to themselves. But where the heart is not truly penitent and converted, that person is not pardoned by the gospel, as being not in the covenant, or a child of promise; and therefore the pardon of a minister, being upon mistake, or to an unqualified person, can reach no further than to admit him into the esteem of men, and to the communion and outward privileges of the church (which is a poor comfort to a soul that must lie in hell); but it can never admit him into the kingdom of heaven. God indeed may approve the act of his ministers, if they go according to his rule, and deal in church administrations with those that make **A CREDIBLE PROFESSION OF FAITH**

AND HOLINESS, as if they had true faith and holiness: but yet he will not therefore make such ministerial acts effectual to the saving of unbelieving or unholy souls. Nay (because I have found many sensual ungodly people inclining to turn papists, because with them they can have a quick and easy pardon of their sins, by the pope, or by the absolution of the priest) let me tell such, that if they understand what they do, even this cheat is too thin to quiet their defiled consciences: for even the papist's school-doctors do conclude, that when the priest absolveth an impenitent sinner, or one that is not qualified for pardon, such a one is not loosed or pardoned in heaven—*Leg. Martin. de Ripalda exposit. Liber. Magist. li. 4. dist. 18. p. 654, 655, & p. 663, 664. dist. 20. Aquin. Dist. 20. q. 1. a. 5. Snar. Tom. 4. in 3. p. disp. 52. Greg. Valent. Tom. 4. disp. 7. q. 20. p. 5. Tolet. lib. 6. cap. 27. Navar. Notab. 17. & 18. Cordub. de indulg. li. 5. q. 23.* they deny not the truth of those words of Origen, *Hom. 14. ad cap. 24. Levit. "Exit quis à fide, perexit de castris ecclesiæ etiamsi episcopi voce non abjiciatur: sicut contru interdum fit, ut aliquis non recto judicio eorum qui præsurunt ecclesiæ, for as mittatur: sed si non egit ut mereretur exire, nihil læditur: interdum enim quod for as mittitur, intus est; & qui foris est, intus videtur retineri:"* and what he saith of excommunication, is true of absolution: an erring key doth neither lock out of heaven, nor let into heaven. A godly

believer shall be saved though the priest condemn him: and an unbeliever or ungodly person shall be condemned by God, though he be absolved by the priest.

Nay, if you have not walked with God in the spirit, but walked after the flesh, though your repentance should be sound and true at the last, it will yet very hardly serve to comfort you, though it may serve to your salvation: because you will very hardly get any assurance that it is sincere. It is dangerous lest it should prove but the effect of fear (which will not save) when it cometh not till death do fright you to it. As Augustine saith, *Nullus expectet, quando peccare non potest: arbitrii enim libertatem querit Deus, ut deleri possint commissa; non necessitatem, sed charitatem, non tantum timorem: quia non in solo timore vivit homo.* Therefore the same Augustine saith, *Siquis positus in ultima necessitate voluerit accipere pœnitentiam, and accipit; fateor vobis, non illi negamus quod petit; sed non præsumimus quod bene hinc exit: si securus hinc exierit, ego nescio: pœnitentiam dare possumus, securitatem non possumus.* You see then how much it is needful to the peace of conscience at the hour of death, that you walk with God in the time of life.

6. Moreover, to walk with God is an excellent preparation for sufferings and death, because it tendeth to acquaint the soul with God, and to embolden it both to go to him in prayer, and to

trust on him, and expect salvation from him. He that walketh with God is so much used to holy prayer, that he is a man of prayer, and is skilled in it, and hath tried what prayer can do with God: so that in the hour of his extremity, he is not to seek either for a God to pray to, or a Mediator to intercede for him, or a spirit of adoption to enable him as a child to fly for help to his reconciled Father. And having not only been frequently with God, but frequently entertained and accepted by him, and had his prayers heard and granted, it is a great encouragement to an afflicted soul in the hour of distress, to go to such a God for help. And it is a dreadful thing when a soul is ready to go out of the world, to have no comfortable knowledge of God, or skill to pray to him, or encouragement to expect acceptance with him: to think that he must presently appear before a God, whom he never knew, nor heartily loved, being never acquainted with that communion with him in the way of grace, which is the way to communion in glory, O what a terrible thought is this! But how comfortable is it when the soul can say—I know whom I have believed! The God that afflicteth me is he that loveth me, and hath manifested his love to me by his daily attractive, assisting and accepting grace! I am going by death to see him intuitively, whom I have often seen by the eye of faith, and to live with him in heaven, with whom I lived here on earth;

from whom, and through whom, and to whom was my life! I go not to an enemy, nor an utter stranger, but to that God who was the spring, the ruler, the guide, the strength and the comfort of my life. He hath heard me so oft, that I cannot think he will now reject me: he hath so often comforted my soul, that I will not believe he will now thrust me into hell: he hath mercifully received me so oft, that I cannot believe he will now refuse me: those that come to him in the way of grace, I have found he will in no wise cast out. As strangeness to God doth fill the soul with distrustful fears, so walking with him doth breed that humble confidence, which is a wonderful comfort in the hour of distress, and a happy preparation to sufferings and death.

7. Lastly, to walk with God, doth increase that love of God in the soul, which is the heavenly tincture, and inclineth it to look upward, and being weary of a sinful flesh and world, to desire to be perfected with God. How happy a preparation for death is this, when it is but the passage to that God with whom we desire to be, and to that place where we fain would dwell for ever! To love the state and place that we are going to, being made connatural and suitable thereto, will much overcome the fears of death. But for a soul that is acquainted with nothing but this life, and savoreth nothing but earth and flesh, and hath no connaturality with the things

above, for such a soul to be surprised with the tidings of death, alas, how dreadful must it be!

And thus I have shewed you the benefits that come by walking with God, which if you love yourselves with a rational love, methinks should resolve every impartial considerate reader, to give up himself without delay, to so desirable a course of life! or, if he have begun it, to follow it more cheerfully and faithfully than he had done.



CHAPTER VII.

I am next to shew you that believers have special obligations to this holy course of life, and therefore are doubly faulty if they neglect it; though indeed, to neglect it totally, or in the main drift of their lives, is a thing inconsistent with a living faith.

Consider, I. If you are true christians, your relations engage you to walk with God. Is he not your reconciled Father, and you his children in a special sense? and whom should children dwell with, but with their father? You were glad when he received you into his covenant that he would enter into so near a relation to you, as he expresseth, 2 Cor. vi. 17, 18, "I will receive you, and will be a Father to you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the

Lord Almighty.” And do you draw back, as if you repented of your covenant, and were not only weary of the duty, but of the privileges and benefits of your relation? You may have access to God, when others are shut out; your prayers may be heard, when the prayers of the wicked are abominable; you may be welcome, when the worldling, and ambitious, and carnal are despised. He that dwelleth in the highest heaven, is willing to look to you with respect, and dwell with you, when he beholdeth the proud afar off; Isa. lxvi. 1, 2, and lvii. 15, 16. and yet will you not come that may be welcome? Doth he put such a difference between you and others, as to feed you as his children at his table, while others are called dogs and are without the doors, and have but your crumbs and leavings; and yet will you be so foolish and unthankful as to run out of your father’s presence, and choose to be without, among the dogs? How came your father’s presence to be so grievous to you, and the privileges of his family to seem so vile? Is it not some unchild-like carriage; the guilt of some disobedience or contempt that hath first caused this? or have you fallen again in love with fleshly pleasures, and some vanity of the world? or have you had enough of God and godliness, till you begin to grow weary of him? if so, you never truly knew him. However it be, if you grow indifferent as to God, do not wonder if shortly you

find him set as light by you: and believe it, the day is not far off, in which the fatherly relation of God, and the privileges of children, will be more esteemed by you: when all things else forsake you in your last distress, you will be loath that God should then forsake you, or seem as a stranger to hide his face: then you will cry out, as the afflicted church, Isa. lxiii. 15, 16. "Look down from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy holiness and of thy glory: where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels and of thy mercies towards me? are they restrained? Doubtless thou art our father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: thou O Lord art our father, our redeemer; thy name is from everlasting." Nothing but God, and his fatherly relation, will then support you: attend him therefore, and with reverent, obedient cheerfulness and delight, converse with him as with your dearest father. For since the beginning of the world, men have not known by sensible evidence, either the ear or the eye, besides God himself, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. Isa. lxiv. 4. Though he be wroth with us because we have sinned, yet doth he meet him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, that remembereth him in his ways. ver. 5. Say not, I have played abroad so long that I dare not now go home; I have sinned so greatly, that I dare not speak to him, or look

him in the face: come yet but with a penitent returning heart, and thou mayest be accepted through the Prince of Peace: prodigals find better entertainment than they did expect, when once they do but resolve for home. If he allow us to begin with "Our Father which art in heaven" we may boldly proceed to ask forgiveness of our trespasses, and whatever else is truly good for us. But alas, as our iniquities seduce us away from God, so the guilt of them affrighteth some from returning to him, and the love of them corrupteth the hearts of others, and makes them too indifferent as to their communion with him; so that too many of his children live as if they did not know their father, or had forgotten him. We may say as Isa. lxiv. 6—9, "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away. And there is none that calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee: for thou hast hid thy face from us, and hast consumed us because of our iniquities. But now, O Lord, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand. Be not wroth, very sore, O Lord, neither remember iniquity for ever: behold, see, we beseech thee, we are all thy people." O do not provoke your father to disown you, or to withdraw his help, or hide

his face, or to send the rod to call you home! for if you do, you will wish you had known the privileges of his presence, and had kept nearer to him! Be not so unnatural, so unthankful, so unkind, as to be weary of your father's presence (and such a father's too) and to take more delight in any others.

Moreover, you are related to God in Christ, as a wife unto a husband, as to covenant union, and nearness and dearness of affection, and as to his tender care of you for your good: and is it seemly, is it wisely or gratefully done of you, to desire rather the company of others, and delight in creatures more than him? Isa. liv. 5, 6. How affectionately doth thy maker call himself the husband of his people! And can thy heart commit adultery, and forsake him? "My covenant they brake, though I was an husband to thee, saith the Lord." Jer. xxxi. 32. O put not God to exercise his jealousy. It is one of his terrible attributes, to be "a jealous God." And can he be otherwise to thee, when thou lovest not his converse or company, and carest not how long thou art from him in the world? Woe to thee if he once say, as Hos. ii. 2. "She is not my wife, neither am I her husband."

Nay, more than this, if you are christians, you are members of the body of Christ: and therefore how can you withdraw yourselves from him and not feel the pain and torment of so sore a wound or dislocation? You cannot live without

a constant dependance on him, and communication from him. John xv. 1, 4, 5, 7. "I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman. Abide in me, and I in you. I am the vine, ye are the branches: he that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

So near are you to Christ, that he delighteth to acquaint you with his secrets. O how many mysteries doth he reveal to those that walk with him, which carnal strangers never know! mysteries of wisdom! mysteries of love and saving grace! mysteries of scripture, and mysteries of providence! mysteries felt by inward experience, and mysteries revealed, foreseen by faith! Not only the strangers that pass by the doors, but even the common servants of the family are unacquainted with the secret operations of the Spirit, and entertainments of grace, and joy in believing, which those that walk with God either do or may possess. Therefore Christ calleth you friends as being more than servants. John xv. 14, 15. "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you: henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what the Lord doth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father, I have made known unto you." It is true, for all this, that every true christian hath reason (and

is apt) to complain of his darkness and distance from God. Alas, they know so little of him, and of the mysteries of his love and kingdom, that sometimes they are apt to think that they are indeed but utter strangers to him: but this is because there is infinitely more still unknown to them than they know! What! can the silly shallow creature comprehend his infinite Creator? or shall we know all that is to be known in heaven, before we enjoy all that is to be enjoyed in heaven? It is no more wonder to hear a believer pant and mourn after a fuller knowledge of God, and nearer access to him, than to seek after heaven, where this will be his happiness. But yet, though his knowledge of God be small, compared with his ignorance, that little knowledge of God which he hath attained, is more mysterious, sublime, and excellent, than all the learning of the greatest unsanctified scholars in the world. Walk with him according to the nearness of your relations to him, and you shall have this excellent knowledge of his mysteries, which no books or teachers alone can give. You shall be effectually touched at the heart with the truths which others do ineffectually hear. You shall be powerfully moved, when they are but ineffectually exhorted. When they only hear the voice without them, you shall hear the voice within you, and as it were behind you, saying, This is the way, walk in it. O that you could duly value such a friend, to watch

over you, and for you, and dwell in you, and tell you faithfully of every danger, and of every duty, and teach you to know good and evil, and what to choose, and what to refuse! How closely and delightfully would you converse with such a blessed friend, if you rightly valued him!

II. Moreover, you that are the servants of God, have by your covenant and profession, renounced and forsaken all things else (as they stand in any opposition to him, or competition with him) and have resigned yourselves wholly unto him alone: and therefore with him must you converse, and be employed, unless you will forsake your covenant. You knew first that it was your interest to forsake the world and turn to God: you knew the world would not serve your turn, nor be instead of God to you either in life, or at death: and upon this knowledge it was that you changed your master, and changed your minds, and changed your way, your work, your hopes: and do you dream now that you were mistaken? do you begin to think that the world is fitter to be your God or happiness? if not, you must still confess that both your interest and your covenant do oblige you to turn your hearts and minds from the things which you have renounced, and to walk with him that you have taken for your God, and to obey him whom you have taken for your king and judge, and to keep close to him with purest love, whom you have taken for your everlasting

portion. Mark what you are minding all the day; while you are neglecting God.—Is it not something that you have renounced? And did you not renounce it upon sufficient cause? Was it not a work of your most serious deliberation? and of as great wisdom, as any that ever you performed? if it were, turn not back in your hearts again from God unto the renounced creature. You have had many a lightning from heaven into your understandings, to bring you to see the difference between them: you have had many a teaching, and many a warning, and many a striving of the spirit, before you were prevailed with to renounce the world, the flesh and the devil, and to give up yourself entirely and absolutely to God. Nay, did it not cost you the smart of some afflictions, before you would be made so wise? And did it not cost you many a gripe of conscience, and many a terrible thought of hell, and of the wrath of God, before you would be heartily engaged to him, in his covenant? And will you now live as strangely and neglectfully towards him, as if those days were quite forgotten? and as if you had never felt such things? and as if you had never been so convinced, or resolved? O christians, take heed of forgetting your former case! your former thoughts! your former convictions and complaints and covenants! God did not work all that upon your hearts to be forgotten; he intended not only your present change, but

your after remembrance of it, for your close adhering to him while you live, and for your quickening and constant perseverance to the end. The forgetting of their former miseries, and the workings of God upon their hearts in their conversion, is a great cause of mutability and revolting, and of unspeakable hurt to many a soul.

Nay, may you not remember also what sorrow you had in the day of your repentance, for your forsaking and neglecting God so long? And will you grow again neglective of him? Was it then so heinous a sin in your eyes; and is it now grown less? Could you then aggravate it so many ways (and justly) and now do you justify or extenuate it? Were you then ready to sink under the burden of it, and were so hardly persuaded that it would be forgiven you; and now do you make so small a matter of it? Did you then so much wonder at your folly, that could so long let out your thoughts and affections upon the creature, while you neglected God and heaven! and do you begin to look that way again? Do you now grow familiar with a life so like to that which was once your state of death; and bear that easily that once was the breaking of your heart? O christians, turn not away from that God again, who once fetched you home, with so much smart and so much grace! with such a twist of love and fatherly severity! Methinks when you remember how

you were once awakened, you should not easily fall asleep again. And when you remember the thoughts which then were in your hearts, and the tears that were in your eyes, and the earnest prayers which you then put up, that God would receive you, and take you for his own, you should not now forget him, and live as if you could live without him. Remember, that so far as you withdraw your hearts from God, and let them follow inferior things, so far you contradict his works upon your hearts; so far you violate your covenant with him, or sin against it; so far you are revolvers, and go against the principal part of your professed religion; yea, so far you are ungodly, as you thus withdraw your hearts from God. Cleave to him, and prosecute your covenant, if you will have the saving benefits of his love and covenant.

III. Moreover, the servants of God are doubly obliged to walk with him, because they have had that experience of the goodness, the safety, and the sweetness of it, which strangers have not. Do you not remember how glad you were, when you first believed that he pardoned and accepted you? and how much you rejoiced in his love and entertainment? and how much better you found your father's house, than ever you had found your sinful state? and how much sweeter his service was than you did before believe? It is like you can remember something like that which is described in Luke xv. 20—24, “ And

he arose and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it: and let us eat and be merry: for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." What would you have thought or said of this prodigal, if after all this he should have been weary of his father's house and company, and have taken more pleasure in his former company? Would you not have said, he was a forgetful and unthankful wretch, and worthy never more to be received? I do not speak to you now as to apostates, that are turned ungodly, and have quite forsaken God and holiness: but I beseech you consider what it is, after such experiences and obligations as these, so much as to abate your love, and grow remiss, and mindless, and indifferent, as if you were weary of God, and were inclined to neglect him, and look again to the world for your hope, and satisfaction, and delight. As you love your souls, and as you would avoid the sorrows which are greater than any that ever you felt, take heed of slighting the love that hath done such wonders for you,

and of dealing so unthankfully with the ever-living God, and of turning thus away from him that hath received you! Remember whilst you live, the love of your espousals: Was God so good to you at the first, and holiness so desirable? and is it not so still?

And I am sure that your own experience will bear witness, that since that time, in all your lives, it never was so well with you as when you walked most faithfully with God. If you have received any falls and hurts, it hath been when you have straggled from him: if ever you had safety, peace, or joy, it hath been when you have been nearest to him: your wounds, and grief, and death, hath been the fruit of your own ways, and of your forsaking him: your recovery, and health, and life, have been the fruit of his ways, and of your adhering to him: many and many a time you have confessed this, and have said, It is good for me to draw near to God. He hath helped you when none else could help you; and comforted you when none else could comfort you. How far are you above the worldling's happiness, when you are nigh to God! One lively thought of his greatness, and excellency, and of his love to you in Jesus Christ, will make the name of wealth, and honor, and favor, and preferment, and sensual pleasures, to seem to you as words of no signification: how indifferent will you be, as to your prosperity in the world, when you feel what it is

to walk with God! If you are lively experimental christians, you have found this to be true: have you not found that it is the very health and ease, and proper employment of your souls to walk with God, and keep close to him? and that all goes well with you while you can do thus, however the world doth esteem or use you? and that when you grow strange or disobedient to God, and mindless of his goodness, his presence, and his authority, you are like the stomach that is sick, and like a bone that is out of joint, that can have no ease till it be healed, and restored to its proper place? No meats or drinks, no company nor recreation, no wealth or greatness will serve to make a sick man well, or ease the dislocated bones. Nothing will serve a faithful holy soul but God: this is the cause of the dolor of his heart, and of the secret groans and complainings of his life, because in this life of distance and imperfection, he finds himself so far from God; and when he hath done all that he can, he is still so dark, and strange, and cold in his affections! When persecution driveth him from the ordinances and public worship, or when sin hath set him at a greater distance from his God, he bemoaneth his soul as David in his banishment from the tabernacle, Ps. xlii. 1—3. “As the hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear

before God? My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?" And it is no wonder, if with his greatest joy he be yet clouded with these sorrows; because he yet wanteth more of God than he enjoyeth: and his enjoying graces (love and joy) are yet imperfect. But when he hath attained his nearest approach to God, he will have fulness of delight in fulness of fruition.

O christians! do I need to tell you, that after all the trials you have made in the world, you have never found any state of life that was worthy your desires, nor that gave you any true content, but only this living upon God? If you have not found such comfort here as others have done, yet at least you have seen it afar off, within your reach; as men that in the Indies, in the discovery of plantations, expect gold mines, when they find those golden sands that promise it. You have found a life which is certainly desirable, and leadeth to joy in the midst of sorrow; and it is no small joy to have a certain promise and prospect of everlasting joy: it is therefore more excusable in those that never tasted any better than the pleasures of the flesh, to neglect this sweeter heavenly life, than it is in you that have been convinced by your own experience, that there is no life to be compared with it.

IV. Your walking with God is the necessary prosecution of your choice and hopes of life

eternal: it is your necessary preparation to your enjoying him in heaven. And have you fixed on those hopes with so great reason and deliberation, and will you now draw back and be slack in the prosecution of them? Have you gone so far in the way to heaven, and do you now begin to look behind you, as if you were about to change your mind? Paul setteth you a better example, Phil. iii. 8—14. “Yea doubtless I account all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him—— If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead: not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” He compareth himself to a runner in a race, that till he apprehend the prize or mark, doth still make forward with all his might, and will not so much as mind or look at any thing behind him, that would turn him back, or stop him in his course. The world and the flesh are the things behind us;

we turned our backs upon them at our conversion, when we turned to God: it is these that would now call back our thoughts, and corrupt our affections, when we should run on, and reach forward to the heavenly prize. It is God and heaven and the remaining duties of a holy life, that are the things before us! And shall we now look back? what! we that are running and striving for a crown of endless glory! we, that if we lose it, do lose our souls and hopes for ever! we, that have loitered in the morning of our lives, and lost so much precious time as we have done! we, that have gone so far in our way, and held out through so many difficulties and assaults!—shall we now grow weary of walking with God, and begin to look to the things behind us? Did he not tell us at the first, that father and mother, and house and land, and life, and all things must be forsaken for Christ, if we will be his disciples? These are the things behind us, which we turned our back on when we consented to the covenant; and are they now grown better? or is God grown worse, that we turn our hearts from him to them? When we first begun our christian race, it was upon supposition that it was for that immortal crown, which all the world is not to be compared to: and have we not still the same consideration before us, to move us to hold on till we attain it? Hold on christians, it is for heaven! Is there

not enough in that word to drive back all the cares and pleasures that importune your minds to forget your God? Is there not enough in that word to quicken you up in your greatest dullness; and to call you home when you are wandering from God; and to make you again fall out with all that would reduce you or divert you, and call it vanity and vexation of spirit? Methinks the forethought of that life and work which you hope to have with God for ever, should make you earnestly desire to have as much of the like on earth, as is here to be attained! If it will be your heaven and happiness then, it must needs be desirable now. It is not beseeming a man that saith he is seeking for perfect communion with God in heaven, and that above all things (as every christian doth,) to live in a daily neglect or forgetfulness of God on earth. Delightfully to draw near him, and exercise all our faculties upon him, or for him, sometime in prayer and contemplation on himself, and always in works of obedience to him—this is the life that beseemeth those that profess to seek eternal life. O therefore let us make it our daily work, to keep our God and glory in our eye, and to spur on our dull affections; and in the diligent attendance and following the captain of our salvation, to prosecute our expected end.

V. Lastly, consider that God doth purposely provide you hard entertainment in the world,

and cause every creature to deny you the pleasure and satisfaction which you desire, that so you may have none to walk with but himself, with any heart-settling comfort and content. If you see not enough in him to allure you to himself, you shall feel enough in the world to drive you to him: if his love and goodness will not serve alone to make him your pleasure, and hold you to him in the best and most excellent way (of love,) at least the storms and troubles that are abroad shall shew you a necessity of keeping close to God; and the love of yourselves shall help you to do that, which was not done by the attraction of his love alone. If you will put him to it, to send out his command to every creature, to cross and vex you, and disappoint all your expectations from it, that so he may force you to remember your Father and your home, deny not then but it is long of yourselves that you were not saved in an easier way. Would you wish God to make that condition pleasant to you, which he seeth you take too much pleasure in already (or seek and desire it, at least) when as it is the pleasantness of the creature that is your danger, and which detaineth your thoughts and affections from himself? If you could but learn to walk with him, and take up your pleasure in his love appearing to you in his creatures, and to make their sweetness a means to your apprehension of the sweetness of his favor, and of the everlasting joys, then you

might say the creature doth you good; and then it is like you might be permitted to possess and use it for such pleasure. The jealous God will watch your hearts, though you watch them not; and he will make you know that he seeth which way they run out from him, and what creature it is that is minded and delighted in while he is neglected, as if he were unsuitable, and scarce desirable. And you must never look that he should long permit you those prohibited delights, or let you alone in those idolatrous inclinations: if he love you, he will cure that carnal love, and recover your love to himself that hath deserved it. If he intend not your salvation, he may let you go, and try again whether the creature will prove better to you than himself: but you cannot think that he will thus let go his children that must live with him for ever. Have you not perceived that this is the design and meaning of his afflicting and disappointing providences—even to leave you no comfortable entertainment or converse but with himself, and with his servants, and with those means that lead you to himself? If you begin to desire to lodge abroad in strange habitations, he will uncover those houses, and will not leave you a room that is dry to put your head in; or he will throw open the doors, and leave all open to the lust of ravenous beasts and robbers: he will have thy heart, and he will have thy company, because thou art his child, and because he

loveth thee: he will allow thee neither thy carnal delights or hopes. If he perceive thee either taking that pleasure in thy prosperity which thou shouldest take in' him alone, or hoping at least that the world may hereafter prove more amiable and delightful to thee; the more he loveth thee the more his providence shall conspire with his grace to change thy mind, by depriving thee of thy unwholesome dangerous delights, and of all thy hopes of such hereafter. Use the world as a traveller, for the ends to which it was ordained, to the service of God, and the furtherance of thy salvation, and then thou shalt find that God will furnish thee with all that is necessary to these necessary ends: but if the world must have your love and care, and must be your chiefest business and delight, and your excuse for not attending upon God, murmur not, nor marvel not if he dispose of it and you accordingly. If you are yet too healthful to think with seriousness on your eternal state,—if you are too rich to part with all for Christ, or openly to own his cause,—if you are too much esteemed in the world to own a scorned slandered religion,—if you are so busy for earth that you cannot have time to think of heaven,—if you have so much delight in house or land, or in your employments, or recreations, or friends, that God and godliness can have little or none of your delight; marvel not then if God do shake your health, or waste your riches, or turn

your honor into contempt, and suffer men to slander and reproach you, and spit in your face, and make you of no reputation:—marvel not if he turn you out of all, or turn all to your grief and trouble, and make the world a desert to you, and the inhabitants as wolves and bears. The great lesson that Christ hath undertaken to teach you, is the difference betwixt the Creator and the creature, and the difference betwixt heaven and earth:—the great work that Christ hath undertaken to do upon you, is to recover your hearts from the world to God: and this lesson he will teach you, and this work he will do upon you, whatever it cost you; for it must be done. Yet is not the world unjust enough, or cruel or vexatious enough to you, to teach you to come home and take up your content and rest in God? It may then prove more cruel, and more vexatious to you, till you have better learned this necessary lesson. Yet is not your condition empty enough of carnal delusory pleasures, to wean you from the world, and make you look to surer things? Yet are you keeping up your worldly hopes that the world will again prove better to you, and that you shall have happy days hereafter? It seems you are not yet brought low enough: you must yet take another purge, and perhaps a sharper than you took before: you must have more blood-letting, till your deliration cease, and your feverish thirst after creature-comforts do abate. It is sad that we

should be so foolish and unkind, as to stay from God, as long as any preferments, or pleasures, or profits in the world will entertain us: but seeing it is so, let us be thankful both to that grace and that providence which cureth us. If you perceive it not better to dwell with God, than with a flattering prospering world, he will try whether you can think it better to dwell with God, than with a malicious, cruel, persecuting world; and whether it be better to have your hearts in heaven, than in poverty, prison, banishment, or reproach. If you find it not better to converse with God, than with those that honor you, please you or prefer you, he will try whether you can think it better to converse with him, than with those that hate, revile, belie, and persecute you. And are these the wise and wholesome methods of our Great Physician? And shall we not rather be ruled by him, than by our brutish appetites? and think better of his counsels, than of the blind concupiscence of the flesh? Let this be the issue of all our sufferings, and all the cruelties and injuries of the world, to drive us home to converse with God, and to turn our desires, and labors, and expectations, to the true felicity that never will forsake us; and then, the will of the Lord be done! Let him choose his means, if this may be the end,—let us kiss the rod, and not revile it, if this may be the fruit of his corrections. Who will not pray that God would deny us those contents

which keep us from seeking our content in him? and that he would deny us all those hurtful pleasures which hinder us from pleasing him, or from making him and his ways our chiefest pleasure? and that he would permit us no such creature converse as hindereth our converse with him? It is best living there (be it in prison or at liberty) where we may live best to God. Come home, O suffering christian, to thy God! take up thy content and rest in him; be satisfied with him as thy portion; and remember where it is that he is to be fully and perpetually enjoyed: and then it is good for thee that thou wast afflicted; for all thy sufferings have their end.

This last consideration will be further prosecuted in the following part: and the directions for walking with God, which I should here give you, I have reserved for a peculiar treatise, intituled *A Christian Directory*.

THE
DESCRIPTION, REASONS AND REWARD
OF THE
BELIEVER'S
WALKING WITH GOD.

ON GENESIS v. 24.

BY RICHARD BAXTER.

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OF CONVERSING WITH GOD IN SOLITUDE.

JOHN xvi. 32.

Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone; and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

HAVING treated of our conformity to Christ in sufferings, in general, I since came distinctly to treat of his particular sufferings in which we must be conformed to him; and having gone over many of those particulars, I am this day to handle the instance of Christ's being forsaken by his friends and followers.

He thought meet to foretel them how they should manifest their infirmity and untrustiness in this temporary forsaking of him, that so he might fullier convince them, that he knew what was in man, and that he knew future contingencies, (or things to come which seem most dependent on the will of man) and that he voluntarily submitted to his deserted state, and expected no support from creatures, but that

man should then do least for Christ, when Christ was doing most for man; that man by an unthankful forsaking Christ, should then manifest his forsaken deplorable state, when Christ was to make atonement for his reconciliation to God, and was preparing the most costly remedy for his recovery. He foretold them of the fruit which their infirmity would produce, to humble them that were apt to think too highly of themselves for the late free confession they had made of Christ, when they had newly said, "Now we are sure that thou knowest all things: by this we are sure that thou comest forth from God." ver. 30.

He answereth them, "Do ye now believe? Behold the hour cometh, &c." Not that Christ would not have his servants know his graces in them, but he would also have them know the corruption that is latent, and the infirmity consistent with their grace. We are very apt to judge of all that is in us, and of all that we shall do hereafter, by what we feel at the present upon our hearts: as when we feel the stirring of some corruption, we are apt to think that there is nothing else, and hardly perceive the contrary grace, and are apt to think it will never be better with us; so when we feel the exercise of faith, desire, or love, we are apt to overlook the contrary corruptions, and to think that we shall never feel them more. But Christ would keep us both humble and vigilant, by acquainting us with the mutability and unconstancy of

our minds. When it goes well with us, we forget that the time is coming when it may go worse. As Christ said to his disciples here in the case of believing, we may say to ourselves in that and other cases—Do we now believe? It is well; but the time may be coming in which we may be brought to shake with the stirrings of our remaining unbelief, and shrewdly tempted to question the truth of christianity itself, and of the holy scriptures, and of the life to come. Do we now rejoice in the persuasions of the love of God? The time may be coming when we may think ourselves forsaken and undone, and think he will esteem and use us as his enemies. Do we now pray with fervor, and pour out our souls enlargedly to God? It is well; but the time may be coming when we shall seem to be as dumb and prayerless, and say, we cannot pray, or else we find no audience and acceptance of our prayers. Christ knoweth that in us which we little know by ourselves; and therefore may foreknow that we will commit such sins, or fall into such dangers as we little fear.

What Christ here prophesieth to them did afterwards all come to pass. As soon as ever danger and trouble did appear, they began to flag, and to shew how ill they could adhere unto him or suffer with him, without his special corroborating grace. In the garden when he was sweating blood in prayer they were sleeping;

though the spirit was willing, the flesh was weak; they could not watch with him one hour. Matt. xxvi. 40, 41. When he was apprehended, they shifted each man for himself, Matt. xxvi. 56. "Then all the disciples forsook him and fled." And as this is said to be that the scriptures might be fulfilled, Matt. xxvi. 54, 56, so it might be said to be, that this prediction of Christ himself might be fulfilled: not that scripture prophesies did cause the sin by which they were fulfilled, nor that God caused the sin to fulfil his own predictions; but that God cannot be deceived who foretold in scriptures long before, that thus it would come to pass. When it is said, that 'thus it must be that the scripture may be fulfilled,' the meaning is not, that 'thus God will make it be' or 'thus he causeth men to do' that he may fulfil the scriptures: it is not *necessitas consequentis vel causata* that is inferred from predictions; but only *necessitas consequentiæ*; a logical necessity in *ordine cognoscendi et dicendi*; not a natural necessity in *ordine essendi*; not a necessity of the thing itself as caused by the prediction or decree; but a necessity of the truth of this conclusion in arguing; 'such a thing will be, because God hath decreed, foreknown or foretold it;' or 'whatever God foretellet, must necessarily come to pass; (that is, will certainly come to pass:) but this God hath foretold; therefore this will come to pass.'

Here are three observable points in the text, that are worthy our distinct consideration, though for brevity sake I shall handle them together.

1. That Christ was forsaken by his own disciples and left alone.

2. When the disciples left Christ, they were scattered every one to his own. They returned to their old habitations, and old acquaintance, and old employment, as if their hopes and hearts had been almost broken, and they had lost all their labor in following Christ so long: yet the root of faith and love that still remained, caused them to inquire further of the end, and to come together in secret to confer about these matters.

3. When Christ was forsaken of his disciples and left alone, yet was he not forsaken of his Father, nor left so alone as to be separated from him or his love.

We are now to consider of this not only as a part of Christ's humiliation, but also as a point in which we must expect to be conformed to him. It may possibly seem strange to us that Christ would suffer all his disciples to forsake him in his extremity; and I doubt it will seem strange to us, when in our extremity, and our suffering for Christ (and perhaps for them) we shall find ourselves forsaken by those that we most highly valued, and had the greatest familiarity with. But there are many reasons of

this permissive providence open to our observation.

1. No wonder if when Christ was suffering for sin, he would even then permit the power and odiousness of sin to break forth, that it might be known he suffered not in vain. No wonder if he permitted his followers to desert him, and to shew the latent unbelief, and selfishness, and unthankfulness that remained in them, that so they might know that the death of Christ was as necessary for them as for others; and the universality of the disease might shew the need that the remedy should be universal. And it is none of Christ's intent to make his servants to seem better than they are, to themselves or others, or to honor himself by the hiding of their faults, but to magnify his pardoning and healing grace, by the means or occasion of the sins which he pardoneth and healeth.

2. Hereby he will bring his followers to the fuller knowledge of themselves, and shew them that which all their days should keep them humble, and watchful, and save them from presumption and trusting in themselves: when we have made any full confession of Christ, or done him any considerable service, we are apt to say with the disciples, Matt. xix. 27. "Behold we have forsaken all and followed thee; what shall we have?" As if they had rather been givers to Christ, than receivers from him; and had

highly merited at his hands: but when Peter forswearth him, and the rest shift for themselves, and when they come to themselves, after such cowardly and ungrateful dealings, then they will better understand their weakness, and know on whom they must depend.

3. Hereby also they shall better understand what they would have been, if God had left them to themselves, that so they may be thankful for grace received, and may not boast themselves against the miserable world, as if they had made themselves to differ, and had not received all that grace by which they excel the common sort: when our falls have hurt us and shamed us, we shall know to whom we must be beholden to support us.

4. Christ would permit his disciples thus far to forsake him, because he would have no support from man, in his sufferings for man: this was part of his voluntary humiliation, to be deprived of all earthly comforts, and to bear affliction even from those few, that but lately were his faithful servants: that men dealing like men, and sinners, while he was doing like God, and as a Saviour, no man might challenge to himself the honor of contributing to the redemption of the world, so much as by encouraging the Redeemer.

5. Christ did permit the faith and courage of his disciples thus far to fail, that their witness to him might be of the greater credit and

authority, when his actual resurrection and the communication of the Spirit should compel them to believe: when all their doubts were dissipated, they that had doubted themselves, and yet were constrained to believe, would be received as the most impartial witnesses by the doubting world.

6. Lastly, by the desertion and dissipation of his disciples, Christ would teach us whenever we are called to follow him in suffering, what to expect from the best of men; even to know that of themselves they are untrusty, and may fail us: and therefore not to look for too much assistance or encouragement from them. Paul lived in a time when christians were more self-denying and stedfast than they are now: and Paul was one that might better expect to be faithfully accompanied in his sufferings for Christ, than any of us: and yet he saith, 2 Tim. iv. 16. "At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me:" and prayeth, that it be not laid to their charge: thus you have seen some reasons why Christ consented to be left of all, and permitted his disciples to desert him in his sufferings.

Yet note here, that it is but a partial temporary forsaking that Christ permitteth; and not a total or final forsaking or apostacy. Though he will let them see that they are yet men, yet will he not leave them to be but as other men: nor will he quite cast them off, or suffer them to perish.

Nor is it all alike that thus forsake him; Peter doth not do as Judas: the sincere may manifest their infirmity; but the hypocrites will manifest their hypocrisy.

And accordingly in our sufferings our familiars that were false-hearted (as being worldlings and carnal at the heart) may perhaps betray us, and set against us, or forsake the cause of Christ, and follow the way of gain and honor: when our tempted shrinking friends that yet may have some sincerity, may perhaps look strange at us, and seem not to know us, and may hide their heads, and shew their fears; and perhaps also begin to study some self-deceiving arguments and distinctions, and to stretch their consciences, and venture on some sin, because they are afraid to venture on affliction; till Christ shall cast a gracious rebuking quickening aspect on them, and shame them for their sinful shame, and fear them from their sinful fears, and inflame their love to him by the motions of his love to them, and destroy the love that turned them from him: and then the same men that dishonorably failed Christ and us, and began to shrink, will turn back and reassume their arms, and by patient suffering overcome, and win the crown as we have done before them.

Use. Christians, expect to be conformed to your Lord in this part of his humiliation also. Are your friends yet fast and friendly to you?

for all that expect that many of them at least should prove less friendly; and promise not yourselves an unchanged constancy in them. Are they yet useful to you? expect the time when they cannot help you. Are they your comforters and delight, and is their company much of your solace upon earth? be ready for the time when they may become your sharpest scourges, and most heart-piercing griefs, or at least when you shall say, We have no pleasure in them. Have any of them, or all, already failed you? What wonder? Are they not men, and sinners? To whom were they ever so constant as not to fail them? Rebuke yourselves for your unwarrantable expectations from them: and learn hereafter to know what man is, and expect that friends should use you as followeth:

1. Some of them that you thought sincere, shall prove perhaps unfaithful and dissemblers, and upon fallings out, or matters of self-interest, may seek your ruin. Are you better than David that had an Abithophel? or than Paul that had a Demas? or than Christ that had a Judas? Some will forsake God: what wonder then if they forsake you? "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Matt. xxiv. 12. Where pride, and vainglory, and sensuality, and worldliness are unmortified at the heart, there is no trustiness in such persons.—For their wealth, or honor, or fleshly interest, they will part with God and their salvation;

much more with their best deserving friends. Why may not you as well as Job have occasion to complain—"He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. They that dwell in mine house, and my maids, count me for a stranger: I am an alien in their sight. I called my servant, and he gave me no answer: I intreated him with my mouth. My breath is strange to my wife, though I intreated for the children's sake of mine own body. Yea, young children despised me; I arose and they spake against me. All my inward friends abhorred me: and they whom I loved are turned against me." Job xix. 13—19. Why may not you as well as David be put to say, "Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." Ps. xli. 9. Those that have been most acquainted with the secrets of your soul, and privy to your very thoughts, may be the persons that shall betray you, or grow strange to you. Those that you have most obliged by benefits, may prove your greatest enemies. You may find some of your friends like birds of prey, that hover about you for what they can get, and when they have caught it, fly away. If you have given them all that you have, they will forsake you, and perhaps reproach you, because you have no more to give them. They are your

friends more for what they yet expect from you, than for what they have already received. If you cannot still be helpful to them, or feed their covetous desires, or supply their wants, you are to them but as one that they had never known. Many a faithful minister of Christ hath studied, and preached, and prayed, and wept for their people's souls, and after all have been taken for their enemies, and used as such; yea, even because they have done so much for them: like the patient, that being cured of a mortal sickness, sued his physician at law for making him sick with the physic (but it is indeed our uncured patients only that are offended with us). Paul was accounted an enemy to the Galatians, because he told them the truth. Ungrateful truth maketh the faithfulest preachers most ungrateful. It must seem no wonder to a preacher of the gospel, when he hath entreated, prayed, and wept night and day for miserable souls, and laid his hands as it were under their feet in hopes of their conversion and salvation, to find them after all his bitter enemies, and seeking his destruction, that could have laid down his life for their salvation. Jeremy seemed too impatient under this affliction, when he said, "Give heed to me, O Lord, and hearken to the voice of them that contend with me. Shall evil be recompensed for good? Remember that I stood before thee to speak good for them, and to turn away thy wrath from them: therefore

deliver up their children to the famine, and pour out their blood by the force of the sword," &c. Jer. xviii. 19—21.

Thus may ingratitude afflict you, and kindness be requited with unkindness, and the greatest benefits be forgotten, and requited with the greatest wrongs: your old familiars may be your foes: and you may be put to say as Jeremy, " For I heard the defaming of many: fear on every side. Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting, saying, Peradventure he will be enticed, and we shall prevail against him, and we shall take our revenge on him." Jer. xx. 10. Thus must the servants of Christ be used, in conformity to their suffering Head.

2. And some that are sincere, and whose hearts are with you, may yet be drawn by temptation to disown you: when malice is slandering you, timorous friendship may perhaps be silent, and afraid to justify you, or take your part: when a Peter in such imbecility and fear can disown and deny his suffering Lord, what wonder if faint-hearted friends disown you, or me, that may give them too much occasion or pretence? why may not you and I be put to say as David did, Ps. xxxviii. 11, 12. " My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore, and my kinsmen stand afar off. They that seek after my life, lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and

imagine deceits all the day long!" They that in fearfulness will fail their maker and redeemer, and hazard their salvation, may by a smaller temptation be drawn to fail such friends as we.

3. Moreover, a hundred things may occasion fallings out, even amongst unfeigned friends: passions may cause inconvenient actions or expressions, and these may cause passions in their friends; and these may grow so high till friends do seem to one another to be like enemies: Paul and Barnabas may grow so hot, as to fall out to a parture. How easily can Satau set fire on the tinder which he findeth in the best and gentlest natures, if God permit him! No friends so near and dear, that passionate weaknesses may not either alienate or make a grief to one another. How apt are we to take unkindnesses at one another, and to be suspicious of our friends, or offended with them! and how apt to give occasion of such offence! How apt are we to censure one another, and to misinterpret the words and actions of our friends! and how apt to give occasion of such mistakes and cutting censures!—And the more kindness we have found in, or expected from our friends, the more their real or supposed injuries will affect us. We are apt to say, 'Had it been a stranger, I could have borne it: but to be used thus by my bosom or familiar friend, goes near my heart.' And indeed the unkindnesses of friends is no small affliction; the

suffering going usually as near the heart, as the person that caused it was near it: especially when our own weakness causeth us to forget the frailty and infirmities of man, and with what allowances and expectations we must choose and use our friends; and when we forget the love that remaineth in the midst of passions.

4. Also cross-interests and unsuitableness may exceedingly interrupt the fastest friendship. Friendship is very much founded in suitability, and maintained by it: and among mortals, there is no perfect suitability to be found; but much unsuitableness still remaineth. That which pleaseth one, is displeasing to another: one liketh this place, and the other that: one liketh this habit, and the other that: one is for mirth, and the other for sadness: one for talk, and the other for silence: one for a public, and the other for a private life. And their personality or individuation having self-love as inseparable, will unavoidably cause a contrariety of interests. The creature is insufficient for us: if one have it, perhaps the other must want it: like a covering too narrow for the bed. Sometimes our reputations seem to stand cross, so that one man's is diminished by another's: and then how apt is envy to create a grudge and distaste, and raise unfriendly jealousies and distastes! Sometimes the commodity of one is the discommodity of the other: and then 'mine and thine,' (which are contrary to the community

of friendship) may divide, and alienate, and make two of those that seemed one. The instances of Abraham and Lot, (upon the difference among their servants) and of Isaac and Ishmael, and of Jacob and Esau, and of Laban and Jacob, and of Leah and Rachel, and of Joseph and his brethren, and of Saul and David, and of Ziba, Mephibosheth and David, with many others, tell us this. It is rare to meet with a Jonathan, that will endearingly love that man, to the death, who is appointed to deprive him of a kingdom. If one can but say 'I suffer by him, or I am a loser by him,' it seemeth enough to excuse unfriendly thoughts and actions. When you can gratify the desires of all the covetous, ambitious, self-seeking persons in the world, or else cure their diseases, and possess their minds with perfect charity, then all the world will be your friends.

5. Cross opinions also are like to alienate many of your friends. This age hath over and over again given the world as full and sad demonstrations of the power of cross opinions to alienate friends and make divisions, as most ages of the world have ever had. If your friend be proud, it is wonderful how he will slight you, and withdraw his love, if you be not of his mind. If he be zealous, he is easily tempted to think it a part of his duty to God, to disown you if you differ from him, as taking you for one that disowneth the truth of God, and therefore one that God

himself disowneth; or at least to grow cold in his affection toward you, and to decline from you as he thinks you do from God. As agreement in opinions doth strangely reconcile affections, so disagreement doth secretly and strangely alienate them; even before you are well aware, your friend hath lost possession of your hearts, because of an unavoidable diversity of apprehensions. When all your friends have the same intellectual complexion and temperature, and measure of understanding with yourselves, then you may have hope to escape the ruptures which unlikeliness and differences of apprehensions might else cause.

6. Moreover, some of your friends may so far overgrow you in wisdom, or wealth, or honor, or worth, in their own conceits, that they may begin to take you to be unsuitable for them, and unmeet for their further special friendship. Alas, poor man! they will pity thee that thou art no wiser, and that thou hast no greater light to change thy mind as fast as they, or that thou art so weak and ignorant as not to see what seems to them so clear a truth; or that thou art so simple to cast away thyself by crossing them that might prefer thee, or to fall under the displeasure of those that have power to raise or ruin thee: but if thou be so simple, thou mayest be the object of their lamentation, but art no familiar friend for them. They think it fittest to close and converse with those of their own rank and stature, and not with such shrubs

and children, that may prove their trouble and dishonor.

7. And some of your friends will think that by a more thorough acquaintance with you, they have found out more of your infirmities or faults; and therefore have found that you are less amiable and valuable than at first they judged you: they will think that by distance, unacquaintedness, and an over hasty love and judgment, they were mistaken in you; and that now they see reason to repent of the love which they think was guilty of some errors and excess: when they come nearer you, and have had more trial of you, they will think they are fitter to judge of you than before. And indeed our defects are so many, and all our infirmities so great, that the more men know us, the more they may see in us that deserveth pity or reproof; and as pictures, we appear less beautiful at the nearest view: though this will not warrant the withdrawing of that love which is due to friends, and to virtue, even in the imperfect; nor will excuse that alienation and decay of friendship that is caused by the pride of such as overlook perhaps much greater failings and weaknesses in themselves, which need forgiveness.

8. And perhaps some of your friends will grow weary of their friendship, having that infirmity of human nature, not to be much pleased with one thing long. Their love is a flower that quickly withereth: it is a short-lived

thing that soon groweth old.—It must be novelty that must feed their love and their delight.

9. And perhaps they may have got some better friends, in their apprehensions, that may have so much interest as to take them up, and leave no room for ancient friends. It may be they have met with those that are more suitable, or can be more useful to them; that have more learning, or wit, or wealth, or power, than you have, and therefore seem more worthy of their friendship.

10. And some of them may think when you are in a low and suffering state, and in danger of worse, that it is part of their duty of self-preservation to be strange to you (though in heart they wish you well). They will think they are not bound to hazard themselves upon the displeasure of superiors, to own or befriend you or any other. Though they must not desert Christ, they think they may desert a man for their own preservation.

To avoid both extremes, in such a case men must both study to understand which way is most serviceable to Christ, and to his church, and withal to be able to deny themselves; and also must study to understand what Christ meaneth in his final sentence, “ In as much as you did it (or did it not) to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it (or did it not) to me.” As if it were to visit the contagious, we must neither cast away our lives to do no

good, or for that which in value holdeth no proportion with them, nor yet must we deny to run any hazard when it is indeed our duty: so is it in our visiting those that suffer for the cause of Christ; (but that here the owning them being the confessing of him, we need more seldom to fear being too forward).

11. And some of your friends may cover their unfaithfulness with the pretence of some fault that you have been guilty of, some error that you hold, or some unhandsome or culpable act that you have done, or some duty that you have left undone or failed in: for they think there is not a better shelter for their unfaithfulness, than to pretend for it the name and cause of God, and so to make a duty of their sin. Who would not justify them, if they can but prove that God requireth them, and religion obligeth them, to forsake you for your faults? There are few crimes in the world that by some are not fathered on God (that most hateth them) as thinking no name can so much honor them. False friends therefore use this means as well as other hypocrites: and though God is love, and condemneth nothing more than uncharitableness and malice; yet these are commonly by false-hearted hypocrites, called by some pious virtuous names, and God himself is entitled to them: so that few worldlings, ambitious persons or timeservers, but will confidently pretend religion for all their falsehood to their friends,

or bloody cruelty to the servants of Christ, that comply not with their carnal interest.

12. Perhaps some of your friends may really mistake your case, and think that you suffer as evil doers, and instead of comforting you may be your sharpest censurers: this is one of the most notable things set out to our observation in the book of Job. It was not the smallest part of his affliction, that when the hand of God was heavy upon him, and then if ever was the time for his friends to have been his comforters and friends indeed, on the contrary they became his scourge, and by unjust accusations and misinterpretations of the providence of God, did greatly add to his affliction! When God had taken away his children, wealth and health, his friends would take away the reputation and comfort of his integrity; and under pretence of bringing him to repentance, did charge him with that which he was never guilty of; they wounded his good name, and would have wounded his conscience, and deprived him of his inward peace. Censorious false accusing friends do cut deeper than malicious slandering enemies: it is no wonder if strangers or enemies do misjudge and misreport our actions; but when your bosom friends, that should most intimately know you, and be the chief witness of your innocency against all others, shall in their jealousy, or envy, or peevishness, or falling out, be your chief reproachers and unjust

accusers, as it makes it seem more credible to others, so it will come nearest to yourselves. And yet this is a thing that must be expected; yea, even your most self-denying acts of obedience to God, may be so misunderstood by godly men, and real friends, as by them to be taken for your great miscarriage, and turned to your rebuke; as David's dancing before the ark was by his wife; which yet did but make him resolve to be yet more vile. If you be cast into poverty, or disgrace, or prison, or banishment, for your necessary obedience to Christ, perhaps your friend or wife may become your accuser for this your greatest service, and say, This is your own doing; your rashness, or indiscretion, or self-conceitedness, or wilfulness hath brought it upon you: what need had you to say such words, or to do this or that? why could not you have yielded in so small a matter? Perhaps your costliest and most excellent obedience shall, by your nearest friends, be called the fruits of pride, or humour, or passion, or some corrupt affection, or at least of folly and inconsiderateness. When flesh and blood hath long been striving in you against your duty, and saying, Do not cast away thyself: O serve not God at so dear a rate: God doth not require thee to undo thyself: why shouldest thou not avoid so great inconveniences?—when with much ado you have conquered all your carnal reasonings, and denied yourselves and your carnal interest,

you must expect, even from some religious friends, to be accused for these very actions; and perhaps their accusations may fasten such a blot upon your names, as shall never be washed out till the day of judgment. By difference of interests or apprehensions, and by unacquaintedness with your hearts and actions, the righteousness of the righteous may be thus taken from him, and friends may do the work of enemies, yea, of Satan himself the accuser of the brethren: and may prove as thorns in your bed, and gravel in your shoes, yea in your eyes, and wrong you much more than open adversaries could have done. How it is like to go with that man's reputation you may easily judge, whose friends are like Job's, and his enemies like David's, that lay snares before him, and diligently watch for matter of reproach: yet this may befall the best of men.

13. You may be permitted by God to fall into some real crime; and then your friends may possibly think it is their duty to disown you, so far as you have wronged God: when you provoke God to frown upon you, he may cause your friends to frown upon you: if you will fall out with him, and grow strange to him, no marvel if your truest friends fall out with you and grow strange to you: they love you for your godliness, and for the sake of Christ; and therefore must abate their love if you abate your godliness, and must for the sake of Christ be

displeased with you for your sins : and if in such a case of real guilt, you should be displeased at their displeasure, and should expect that your friend should befriend your sin, or carry himself towards you in your guilt as if you were innocent, you will but shew that you understand not the nature of true friendship, nor the use of a true friend, and are yet yourselves too friendly to your sins.

14. Moreover, those few friends that are truest to you, may be utterly unable to relieve you in your distress, or to give you ease, or do you any good. The case may be such that they can but pity you, and lament your sorrows, and weep over you : you may see in them that man is not as God, whose friendship can accomplish all the good that he desireth to his friends. The wisest, and greatest, and best of men are silly comforters, and ineffectual helps ; you may be sick, and pained, and grieved, and distressed, notwithstanding any thing that they can do for you : nay, perhaps in their ignorance they may increase your misery, while they desire your relief ; and by striving indirectly to help and ease you, may tie the knot faster and make you worse : they may provoke those more against you that oppress you, while they think they speak that which should tend to set you free : they may think to ease your troubled minds by such words as shall increase the trouble ; or to deliver you as Peter would have delivered Christ,

and saved his Saviour, first by carnal counsel, Matt. xvi. 22, " Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee," and then by carnal unjust force (by drawing his sword against the officers.) Love and good meaning will not prevent the mischiefs of ignorance and mistake. If your friend cut your throat while he thought to cut but a vein to cure your disease, it is not his friendly meaning that will save your lives. Many a thousand sick people are killed by their friends, that attend them with an earnest desire of their life, while they ignorantly give them that which is contrary to their disease, and will not be the less pernicious for the good meaning of the giver. Who have more tender affections than mothers to their children? and yet a great part of the calamity of the world of sickness, and the misery of man's life, proceedeth from the ignorant and erroneous indulgence of mothers to their children, who to please them let them eat and drink what they will, and use them to excess and gluttony in their childhood, till nature be abused and mastered and clogged with those superfluities and crudities, which are the dunghill matter of most of the following diseases of their lives.

I might here also remember you, how your friends may themselves be overcome with a temptation, and then become the more dangerous tempters of you, by how much the greater their interest is in your affections. If they be

infected with error, they are the likeliest persons to ensnare you: if they be tainted with covetousness or pride, there is none so likely to draw you to the same sin:—and so your friends may be in effect your most deadly enemies, deceivers and destroyers.

15. And if you have friends that are never so firm and constant, they may prove, not only unable to relieve you, but very additions to your grief. If they are afflicted in the participation of your sufferings, as your troubles are become theirs (without your ease) so their trouble for you will become yours, and so your stock of sorrow will be increased. And they are mortals, and liable to distress as well as you; and therefore they are like to bear their share in several sorts of sufferings: and so friendship will make their sufferings to be yours; their sicknesses and pains, their fears and griefs, their wants and dangers will all be yours; and the more they are your hearty friends the more they will be yours: and so you will have as many additions to the proper burden of your griefs as you have suffering friends. When you do but hear that they are dead, you say, as Thomas, John xi. 16. “Let us also go that we may die with him;” and having many such friends, you will almost always have one or other of them in distress, and so be seldom free from sorrow; besides all that which is properly your own.

16. Lastly, if you have a friend that is both

true and useful, yet you may be sure he must stay with you but a little while. The godly men will cease, and the faithful fail from among the children of men; while men of lying flattering lips, and double hearts survive, and the wicked walk on every side, while the vilest men are exalted. Ps. xii, 1, 2, 8. While swarms of false malicious men, are left round about you, perhaps God will take away your dearest friends. If among a multitude of unfaithful ones, you have but one that is your friend indeed, perhaps God will take away that one. He may be separated from you into another country; or taken away to God by death. Not that God doth grudge you the mercy of a faithful friend; but that he would be your all, and would not have you hurt yourselves with too much affection to any creature, and for other reasons to be named anon.

And to be forsaken of your friends, is not all your affliction: but to be so forsaken is a great aggravation of it. 1. For they use to forsake us in our greatest sufferings and straits, when we have the greatest need of them.

2. They fail us most at a dying hour, when all other worldly comfort faileth. As we must leave our houses, lands and wealth, so must we for the present leave our friends: and as all the rest are silly comforters, when we have once received our citation to appear before the Lord, so also are our friends but silly comforters: they can weep over us, but they cannot, with all,

their care, delay the separating stroke of death, one day or hour.

Only by their prayers, and holy advice, remembering us of everlasting things, and provoking us in the work of preparation, they may prove to us friends indeed. And therefore we must value a holy, heavenly, faithful friend, as one of the greatest treasures upon earth: and while we take notice how as men they may forsake us, we must not deny but that as saints they are precious, and of singular use to us. And Christ useth by them to communicate his mercies; and if any creatures in the world may be blessings to us, it is holy persons, that have most of God in their hearts and lives.

3. And it is an aggravation of the cross, that they often fail us, when we are most faithful in our duty, and stumble most upon the most excellent acts of our obedience.

4. And those are the persons that oftentimes fail us, of whom we have deserved best, and from whom we might have expected most.

Review the experiences of the choicest servants that Christ hath had in the world, and you shall find enough to confirm you of the vanity of man, and the instability of the dearest friends. How highly was Athanasius esteemed; and yet at last deserted and banished even by the famous Constantine himself! How excellent a man was Gregory Nazianzene, and highly valued in the church; and yet by reproach and discouragement

ments driven away from his church at Constantinople, whither he was chosen; and envied by the bishops round about him. How worthy a man was the eloquent Chrysostome, and highly valued in the church; and yet how bitterly was he prosecuted by Hierome and Epiphanius; and banished, and died in a second banishment, by the provocation of factious contentious bishops, and an empress impatient of his plain reproofs! What person more generally esteemed and honored for learning, piety and peaceableness than Melancthon; and yet by the contentions of Illyricus and his party, he was made weary of his life. As highly as Calvin was (deservedly) valued at Geneva, yet once in a popular lunacy and displeasure, they drove him out of their city, and in contempt of him some called their dogs by the name of Calvin; (though after they were glad to intreat him to return.) How much our Grindal and Abbot were esteemed, it appeareth by their advancement to the archbishopric of Canterbury; and yet who knoweth not that their eminent piety sufficed not to keep them from dejecting frowns? And if you say, that it is no wonder if with princes through interest, and with people through levity, it be thus; I might heap up instances of the like untrustiness of particular friends: but all history and the experiences of the most, do so much abound with them, that I think it needless. Which of us must not say with David, that “ All men are

liars," Ps. cxvi. that is, deceitful and untrusty; either through unfaithfulness, weakness, or insufficiency; that either will forsake us, or cannot help us in the time of need?

Was Christ forsaken in his extremity by his own disciples, to teach us what to expect or bear? Think it not strange then to be conformed to your Lord, in this, as well as in other parts of his humiliation. Expect that men should prove deceitful: not that you should entertain censorious suspicions of your particular friends; but remember in general that man is frail, and the best too selfish and uncertain; and that it is no wonder if those should prove your greatest grief, from whom you had the highest expectations. Are you better than Job, or David, or Christ; and are your friends more firm and unchangeable than their's?

Consider, 1. That creatures must be set at a sufficient distance from their creator. All-sufficiency, immutability, and indefectible fidelity, are proper to Jehovah. As it is no wonder for the sun to set or be eclipsed, as glorious a body as it is; so it is no wonder for a friend, a pious friend, to fail us, for a time, in the hour of our distress. There are some that will not: but there is none but may, if God should leave them to their weakness. Man is not your rock: he hath no stability but what is derived, dependant, and uncertain, and defectible. Learn therefore to rest on God alone,

and lean not too hard or confidently upon any mortal wight.

2. And God will have the common infirmity of man to be known, that so the weakest may not be utterly discouraged, nor take their weakness to be gracelessness, whilst they see that the strongest also have their infirmities, though not so great as theirs. If any of God's servants live in constant holiness and fidelity, without any shakings or stumbling in their way, it would tempt some self-accusing troubled souls to think that they were altogether graceless, because they are so far short of others: but when we read of a Peter's denying his master in so horrid a manner, with swearing and cursing that he knew not the man, Matt. xxvi. 74, and of his dissimulation and not walking uprightly, Gal. ii. and of a David's unfriendly and unrighteous dealing with Mephibosheth, the seed of Jonathan, and of his most vile and treacherous dealing with Uriah, a faithful and deserving subject, it may both abate our wonder and offence at the unfaithfulness of our friends, and teach us to compassionate their frailty, when they desert us; and also somewhat abate our immoderate dejectedness and trouble, when we have failed God or man ourselves.

3. Moreover, consider how the odiousness of that sin, which is the root and cause of such unfaithfulness, is greatly manifested by the failing of our friends. God will have the odious-

ness of the remnants of our self-love and carnal-mindedness, and cowardice appear: we should not discern it in the seed and root, if we did not see and taste it in the fruits. Seeing without tasting will not sufficiently convince us: a crab looks as beautiful as an apple; but when you taste it, you better know the difference. When you must yourselves be unkindly used by your friends, and forsaken by them in your distress, and you have tasted the fruits of the remnants of their worldliness, selfishness, and carnal fears, you will better know the odiousness of these vices, which thus break forth against all obligations to God and you, and notwithstanding the light, the conscience, and perhaps the grace, that doth resist them.

4. Are you not prone to overvalue and overlove your friends? If so, is not this the meetest remedy for your disease? In the loving of God, we are in no danger of excess, and therefore have no need of any thing to quench it; and in the loving of the godly purely upon the account of Christ, and in loving saints as saints, we are not apt to go too far: but yet our understandings may mistake, and we may think that saints have more of sanctity than indeed they have; and we are exceeding apt to mix a selfish common love with that which is spiritual and holy; and at the same time, when we love a christian as a christian, we are apt not only to love him (as we ought) but to overlove him because he is our

friend, and loveth us. Those christians that have no special love to us, we are apt to undervalue and neglect, and love them below their holiness and worth: but those that we think entirely love us, we love above their proper worth, as they stand in the esteem of God: not but that we may love those that love us, and add this love to that which is purely for the sake of Christ; but we should not let our own interest prevail and overtop the interest of Christ, nor love any so much for loving us, as for loving Christ: and if we do so, no wonder if God shall use such remedies as he seeth meet, to abate our excuse of selfish love.

O how highly are we apt to think of all that good which is found in those who are the highest esteemers of us, and most dearly love us; when perhaps in itself it is but some ordinary good, or ordinary degree of goodness which is in them! Their love to us irresistibly procureth our love to them; and when we love them, it is wonderful to observe, how easily we are brought to think well of almost all they do, and highly to value their judgments, graces, parts and works; when greater excellencies in another perhaps are scarce observed, or regarded but as a common thing: and therefore the destruction or want of love, is apparent in the vilifying thoughts and speeches, that most men have of one another; and in the low esteem of the judgments, and performances

and lives of other men: (much more in their contempt, reproaches and cruel persecutions.) Now though God will have us increase in our love of Christ in his members, and in our pure love of christians as such, and in our common charity to all, yea, and in our just fidelity to our friend; yet would he have us suspect and moderate our selfish and excessive love, and inordinate partial esteem of one above another, when it is but for ourselves, and on our own account. And therefore as he will make us know, that we ourselves are no such excellent persons, as that it should make another so laudable, or advance his worth, because he loveth us; so he will make us know, that our friends whom we overvalue, are but like other men: if we exalt them too highly in our esteem, it is a sign that God must cast them down. And as their love to us was it that made us so exalt them; so their unkindness or unfaithfulness to us, is the fittest means to bring them lower in our estimation and affection. God is very jealous of our hearts, as to our overvaluing and overloving any of his creatures: what we give inordinately and excessively to them, is some way or other taken from him, and given them to his injury, and therefore to his offence. - Though I know that to be void of natural, friendly or social affections, is an odious extreme on the other side; yet God will rebuke us if we are guilty

of excess. And it is the greater and more inexcusable fault to overlove the creature, because our love to God is so cold, and hardly kindled and kept alive. He cannot take it well to see us dote upon dust and frailty like ourselves, at the same time when all his wondrous kindness, and attractive goodness, do cause but such a faint and languid love to him, which we ourselves can scarcely feel. If therefore he cure us by permitting our friends to shew us truly what they are, and how little they deserve such excessive love (when God hath so little) it is no more wonder, than it is that he is tender of his glory, and merciful to his servant's souls.

5. By the failing and unfaithfulness of our friends, the wonderful patience of God will be observed and honored, as it is shewed both to them and us. When they forsake us in our distress (especially when we suffer for the cause of Christ) it is God that they injure more than us: and therefore if he bear with them, and forgive their weakness upon repentance, why should not we do so that are much less injured? The world's perfidiousness should make us think how great and wonderful is the patience of God, that beareth with, and beareth up, so vile, ungrateful, treacherous men, that abuse him to whom they are infinitely obliged! And it should make us consider, when men deal treacherously with us, how great is that mercy that hath borne with, and pardoned greater wrongs which

I myself have done to God, than these can be which men have done to me! It was the remembrance of David's sin, that had provoked God to raise up his own son against him (of whom he had been too fond) which made him so easily bear the curses and reproach of Shimei. It will make us bear abuse from others, to remember how ill we have dealt with God, and how ill we have deserved at his hands ourselves.

6. And I have observed another of the reasons of God's permitting the failing of our friends, in the season and success. It is, that the love of our friends may not hinder us when we are called to suffer or die. When we over-love them, it teareth our very hearts to leave them; and therefore it is a strong temptation to draw us from our duty, and to be unfaithful to the cause of Christ, lest we should be taken from our too dear friends, or lest our suffering cause their too much grief. It is so hard a thing to die with willingness and peace, that it must needs be a mercy to be saved from the impediments which make us backward: and the excessive love of friends and relations, is not the least of these impediments. O how loth is many a one to die, when they think of parting with wife, or husband, or children, or dear and faithful friends! Now I have oft observed, that a little before their death or sickness, it is ordinary with God to permit

some unkindness between such too dear friends to arise, by which he moderated and abated their affections, and made them a great deal the willing to die. Then we are ready to say, It is time for me to leave the world, when not only the rest of the world, but my dearest friends have first forsaken me! This helpeth us to remember our dearest everlasting friend, and to be grieved at the heart that we have been no truer ourselves to him, who would not have forsaken us in our extremity. And sometime it maketh us even weary of the world, and to say as Elias, Lord take away my life, &c. 1 Kings xix. 4, 10, 14. when we must say, I thought I had one friend left, and behold even he forsaketh me in my distress. As the love of friends entangleth our affections to this world, so to be weaned by their unkindnesses from our friends, is a great help to loosen us from the world, and proveth oft a very great mercy to a soul that is ready to depart.

And as the friends that love us most, and have most interest in our esteem and love, may do more than others, in tempting us to be unfaithful to our Lord, to entertain any error, to commit any sin, or to flinch in suffering; so when God hath permitted them to forsake us, and to lose their too great interest in us, we are fortified against all such temptations from them. I have known where a former intimate friend hath grown strange, and broken former

friendship, and quickly after turned to such dangerous ways and errors, as convinced the other of the mercifulness of God, in weakening his temptation by his friend's desertion; who might else have drawn him along with him into sin. And I have often observed, that when the husbands have turned from religion to infidelity, familism, or some dangerous heresy, that God hath permitted them to hate and abuse their wives so inhumanly, as that it preserved the poor women from the temptation of following them in their apostacy or sin: when as some other women with whom their husbands have dealt more kindly, have been drawn away with them into pernicious paths.

Therefore still I must say, we were undone if we had the disposing of our own conditions. It would be long before we should have been willing ourselves to be thus unkindly dealt with by our friends: and yet God hath made it to many a soul, a notable means of preserving them from being undone for ever. Yea, the unfaithfulness of all our friends, and the malice and cruelty of all our enemies, doth us not usually so much harm, as the love and temptation of some one deluded erring friend, whom we are ready to follow into the gulf.

7. Lastly, consider that it is not desirable or suitable to our state, to have too much of our comfort by any creature: not only because it is most pure and sweet which is most immediately

from God; but also because we are very prone to overlove the creature; and if it should but seem to be very commodious to us, by serving our necessities or desires, it would seem the more amiable, and therefore be the stronger snare; the work of mortification doth much consist in the annihilation or deadness of all the creatures as to any power to draw away our hearts from God, or to entangle us and detain us from our duty. And the more excellent and lovely the creature appeareth to us, the less it is dead to us, or we to it; and the more will it be able to hinder or ensnare us.

When you have well considered all these things, I suppose you will admire the wisdom of God in leaving you under this kind of trial, and weaning you from every creature, and teaching you by his providence as well as by his word, to "Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" And you will see that it is no great wonder that corrupted souls, that live in other sins, should be guilty of this unfaithfulness to their friends: and that he that dare unthankfully trample upon the unspeakable kindness of the Lord, should deal unkindly with the best of men. You make no great wonder at other kind of sins, when you see the world continually commit them; why then should you make a greater or a stranger matter of this than of the rest? Are you better than God? Must unfaith-

fulness to you be made more heinous, than that unfaithfulness to him, which yet you daily see and slight? The least wrong to God is a thousandfold more than the greatest that can be done to you, as such. Have you done that for your nearest friend, which God hath done for him and you, and all men? Their obligations to you are nothing in comparison of their great and manifold obligations to God.

And you know that you have more wronged God yourselves, than any man ever wronged you: and if yet for all that he bear with you, have you not great reason to bear with others?

Yea, you have not been innocent towards men yourselves.—Did you never wrong or fail another? or rather, are you not apter to see and aggravate the wrong that others do to you, than that which you have done to others? May you not call to mind your own neglects, and say, as Adoni-bezeck, Judg. i. 7, “Threescore and ten kings having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me.” Many a one have I failed or wronged; and no wonder if others fail and wrong me.

Nay, you have been much more unfaithful and injurious to yourselves than ever any other hath been to you. No friend was so near you as yourselves: none had such a charge of you: none had such helps and advantages to do you good or hurt: and yet all the enemies you have

in the world, even in earth or hell, have not wronged and hurt you half so much as you have done yourselves. Oh! methinks, the man or woman that knoweth themselves, and knoweth what it is to repent; that ever saw the greatness of their own sin and folly, should have no great mind or leisure to aggravate the failings of their friends, or the injuries of their enemies, considering what they have proved to themselves! Have I forfeited my own salvation, and deserved everlasting wrath, and sold my Saviour and my soul for so base a thing as sinful pleasure, and shall I ever make a wonder of it that another man doth me some temporal hurt? Was any friend so near to me as myself; or more obliged to me? O sinful soul, let thy own rather than thy friend's deceit, and treachery, and neglects, be the matter of thy displeasure, wonder and complaints!

And let thy conformity herein to Jesus Christ, be thy holy ambition and delight: not as it is thy suffering, nor as it is caused by men's sin; but as it is thy conformity and fellowship in the sufferings of thy Lord, and caused by his love.

I have already shewed you that sufferers for Christ, are in the highest form among his disciples. The order of his followers usually is this; 1. At our entrance, and in the lowest form, we are exercised with the fears of hell, and God's displeasure, and in the works of repentance for the sin that we have done. 2. In the second form, we come to think more seri-

ously of the remedy, and to inquire what we shall do to be saved, and to understand better what Christ hath done and suffered, and what he is and will be to us; and to value him and his love and grace: and here we are much inquiring how we may know our own sincerity, and our interest in Christ; and are laboring for some assurance, and looking after signs of grace.

3. In the next form or order we are searching after further knowledge, and laboring better to understand the mysteries of religion, and to get above the rudiments and first principles: and here if we scape turning bare opinionists or heretics by the snare of controversy or curiosity, it is well.

4. In the next form we set ourselves to the fuller improvement of all our further degrees of knowledge; and to digest it all, and turn it into stronger faith, and love, and hope, and greater humility, patience, self-denial, mortification, and contempt of earthly vanities, and hatred of sin; and to walk more watchfully and holily, and to be more in holy duty.

5. In the next form we grow to be more public-spirited: to set our hearts on the church's welfare, and long more for the progress of the gospel, and for the good of others; and to do all the good in the world that we are able, for men's souls or bodies, but especially to long and lay out ourselves for the conversion and salvation of ignorant, secure, unconverted souls. The counterfeit of this, is, an eager desire to proselyte others to

our opinions, or that religion which we have chosen, by the direction of flesh and blood, or which is not of God, nor according unto godliness, but doth subserve our carnal ends. 6. In the next form we grow to study more the pure and wonderful love of God in Christ, and to relish and admire that love, and to be taken up with the goodness and tender mercies of the Lord, and to be kindling the flames of holy love to him that hath thus loved us, and to keep our souls in the exercise of that love; and withal to live in joy, and thanks, and praise to him that hath redeemed us and loved us: and also by faith to converse in heaven, and to live in holy contemplation, beholding the glory of the Father and the Redeemer in the glass which is fitted to our present use, till we come to see him face to face. Those that are the highest in this form, do so walk with God, and burn in love, and are so much above inferior vanities, and are so conversant by faith in heaven, that their hearts even dwell there, and there they long to be for ever. 7. And in the highest form in the school of Christ, we are exercising this confirmed faith and love, in sufferings, especially for Christ; in following him with our cross, and being conformed to him, and glorifying God in the fullest exercise and discovery of his graces in us; and in an actual trampling upon all that standeth up against him, for our hearts; and in bearing the fullest witness to his truth and cause, by con-

stant enduring, though to the death. Not but that the weakest that are sincere, must suffer for Christ if he call them to it: martyrdom itself is not proper to the strong believers: whoever forsaketh not all that he hath for Christ, cannot be his disciple. Luke xiv. 33. But to suffer with that faith and love forementioned, and in that manner, is proper to the strong: and usually God doth not try and exercise his young and weak ones with the trials of the strong; nor set his infants on so hard a service, nor put them in the front or hottest of the battle, as he doth the ripe confirmed christians. The sufferings of their inward doubts and fears doth take up such: it is the strong that ordinarily are called to sufferings for Christ, at least in any high degree. I have digressed thus far to make it plain to you, that our conformity to Christ, and fellowship with him in his sufferings, in any notable degree, is the lot of his best confirmed servants, and the highest form in his school among his disciples: and therefore not to be inordinately feared or abhorred, nor to be the matter of impatency, but of holy joy: and in such infirmities we may glory. And if it be so of sufferings in the general, (for Christ) then is it so of this particular sort of suffering, even to be forsaken of all our best and nearest, dearest friends, when we come to be most abused by the enemies.

For my own part, I must confess that as I am

much wanting in other parts of my conformity to Christ, so I take myself to be yet much short, of what I expect he should advance me to, as long as my friends no more forsake me. It is not long since I found myself in a low (if not a doubting) case, because I had so few enemies and so little sufferings for the cause of Christ (though I had much of other sorts:) and now that doubt is removed by the multitude of furies which God hath let loose against me. But yet, methinks, while my friends themselves are so friendly to me, I am much short of what I think I must at last attain to.

But let us look further into the text, and see what is the cause of the failing and forsaking Christ in the disciples; and what it is that they betake themselves to, when they leave him.

“Ye shall be scattered every man to his own.”

Self-denial was not perfect in them, selfishness therefore in this hour of temptation did prevail. They had before forsaken all to follow Christ; they had left their parents, their families, their estates, their trades, to be his disciples: but though they believed him to be the Christ, yet they dreamed of a visible kingdom, and did all this with too carnal expectations of being great men on earth, when Christ should begin his reign. And therefore when they saw his apprehension and ignominious suffering, and thought now they were frustrate of their hopes, they seem to repent that they had followed him

(though not by apostacy and an habitual or plenary change of mind, yet) by a sudden passionate frightful apprehension, which vanished when grace performed its part. They now began to think that they had lives of their own to save, and families of their own to mind, and business of their own to do: they had before forsaken their private interests and affairs, and gathered themselves to Jesus Christ, and lived in communion with him, and one another: but now they return to their trades and callings, and are scattered every man to his own.

Selfishness is the great enemy of all societies, of all fidelity and friendship: there is no trusting that person in whom it is predominant. And the remnants of it where it doth not reign, do make men walk unevenly and unstedfastly towards God and men. They will certainly deny both God and their friends, in a time of trial who are not able to deny themselves: or rather he never was a real friend to any, that is predominantly selfish. They have always some interest of their own, which their friend must needs contradict, or is insufficient to satisfy. Their houses, their lands, their monies, their children, their honor or something which they call their own, will be frequently the matter of contention; and are so near them, that they can for the sake of these cast off the nearest friend. Contract no special friendship with a selfish man; nor put no confidence in him, whatever friendship he may

profess. He is so confined to himself, that he hath no true love to spare for others: if he seem to love a friend, it is not as a friend, but as a servant, or at best as a benefactor: he loveth you for himself, as he loveth his money, or horse, or house, because you may be serviceable to him: or as a horse or dog doth love his keeper, for feeding him: and therefore when your provender is gone, his love is gone: when you have done feeding him, he hath done loving you. When you have no more for him, he hath no more for you.

Object. But (some will say) it is not the falseness of my friend that I lament, but the separation, or the loss of one that was most faithful: I have found the deceitfulness of ordinary friends; and therefore the more highly prize those few that are sincere. I had but one true friend among abundance of self-seekers; and that one is dead, or taken from me, and I am left as in a wilderness, having no mortal man that I can trust or take much comfort in.

Answ. Is this your case? I pray you answer these few questions, and suffer the truth to have its proper work upon your mind.

Quest. 1. Who was it that deprived you of your friend? Was it not God? Did not he that gave him you take him from you? Was it not his Lord and owner that called him home? And can God do any thing injuriously or amiss? Will you not give him leave to do as he list with

his own? Dare you think that there was wanting either wisdom or goodness, justice or mercy in God's disposal of your friend? Or will you ever have rest, if you cannot have rest in the will of God?

2. How know you what sin your friend might have fallen into, if he had lived as long as you would have him? You will say, that God could have preserved him from sin: it is true: but God preserveth sapientially, by means, as well as omnipotentially: and sometime he seeth that the temptations to that person are like to be so strong, and his corruption like to get such advantage, and that no means is so fit as death itself, for his preservation. And if God had permitted your friend by temptation to have fallen into some scandalous sin, or course of evil, or into errors or false ways, would it not have been much worse than death to him and you? God might have suffered your friend that was so faithful, to have been sifted and shaken as Peter was, and to have denied his Lord, and to have seemed in your own eyes, as odious as he before seemed amiable.

3. How know you what unkindness to yourself, your dearest friend might have been guilty of? Alas! there is greater frailty and inconstancy in man than you are aware of. And there are sadder roots of corruption unmortified, that may spring up into bitter fruits, than most of us ever discover in ourselves. Many a mother hath her

heart broken by the unnaturalness of such a child, or the unkindness of such a husband, as if they had died before, would have been lamented by her, with great impatience and excess. How confident soever you may be of the future fidelity of your friend, you little know what trial might have discovered. Many a one hath failed God and man that once were as confident of themselves, as ever you were of your friend. And which of us see not reason to be distrustful of ourselves? And can we know another better than ourselves; or promise more concerning him?

4. How know you what great calamity might have befallen your friend, if he had lived as long as you desired? When the righteous seem to men to perish, and merciful men are taken away, it is from the evil to come that they are taken. Isa. lvii. 1. How many of my friends have I lamented as if they had died unseasonably, concerning whom some following providence quickly shewed me, that it would have been a grievous misery to them to have lived longer! Little know you what calamities were imminent on his person, his family, kindred, neighbours, country, that would have broke his heart. What if a friend of yours had died immediately before some calamitous subversion of a kingdom, some ruins of the church, &c. and if ignorantly he had done that which brought these things to pass, can you imagine how lamentably

sad his life would have been to him, to have seen the church, the gospel, and his country in so sad a case; especially if it had been long of him? Many that have unawares done that which hath ruined but a particular friend, have lived in so much grief and trouble, as made them consent that death should both revenge the injured on them, and conclude their misery. What then would it have been to have seen the public good subverted, and the faithful overwhelmed in misery, and the gospel hindered, and holy worship changed for deceit and vanity; and for conscience to have been daily saying, ‘I had a hand in all this misery: I kindled the fire that hath burned up all?’

What comfort can you think such friends if they had survived, would have found on earth: unless it were a comfort to hear the complaints of the afflicted, to see and hear such odious sins as sometimes vexed righteous Lot to see and hear; or to hear of the scandals of one friend, and the apostacy of another, and the sinful compliances and declinings of a third; and to be under temptations, reproaches and afflictions themselves? Is it a matter to be so much lamented that God hath prevented their greater miseries and woe?

5. What was the world to your friends while they did enjoy it? Or what is it now, or like to be hereafter to yourselves? Was it so good and kind to them, as that you should lament their

separation from it? Was it not to them a place of toil and trouble, of envy and vexation, of enmity and poison; of successive cares, and fears, and griefs; and worst of all, a place of sin? Did they groan under the burden of a sinful nature, a distempered, tempted, troubled heart of languishings and weakness of every grace; of the rebukes of God, the wounds of conscience, and the malice of a wicked world? And would you have them under these again? Or is their deliverance become your grief? Did you not often join in prayer with them, for deliverance from malice, calamities, troubles, imperfections, temptations, and sin? and now those prayers are answered in their deliverance: and do you now grieve at that which then you prayed for?

. Doth the world use yourselves so well and kindly, as that you should be sorry that your friends partake not of the feast? Are you not groaning from day to day yourselves; and are you grieved that your friends are taken from your griefs? You are not well pleased with your own condition: when you look into your hearts you are displeased and complain: when you look into your lives, you are displeased and complain: when you look into your families, into your neighbourhoods, unto your friends, unto the church, unto the kingdom, unto the world, you are displeased and complain.—And are you also displeased that your friends are not

under the same displeas'dness and complaints as you? Is the world a place of rest or trouble to you? And would you have your friends to be as far from rest as you?

And if you have some ease and peace at present, you little know what storms are near! You may see the days, you may hear the tidings, you may feel the griping griefs and pains, which may make you call for death yourselves, and make you say that a life on earth is no felicity, and make you confess that they are blessed that are dead in the Lord, as resting from their labors, and being past these troubles, griefs, and fears. Many a poor troubled soul is in so great distress, as that they take their own lives to have some taste of hell: and yet at the same time are grieving because their friends are taken from them, who would have been griev'd for their griefs, and for aught they know might have fallen into as sad a state as they themselves are now lamenting.

6. Do you think it is for the hurt or the good of your friend, that he is removed hence? It cannot be for his hurt unless he be in hell. (At least, it is uncertain whether to live would have been for his good, by an increase of grace, and so for greater glory.) And if he be in hell, he was no fit person for you to take much pleasure in upon earth; he might be indeed a fit object for your compassion, but not for your complacency. Sure you are not undone for

want of such company as God will not endure in his sight, and you must be separated from for ever. But if they be in heaven, you are scarce their friends if you would wish them thence. Friendship hath as great respect to the good of our friends as of ourselves. And do you pretend to friendship, and yet lament the removal of your friend to his greatest happiness? Do you set more by your own enjoying his company, than by his enjoying God in perfect blessedness? This sheweth a very culpable defect either in faith or friendship; and therefore beseemeth not christians and friends. If love teacheth us to mourn with them that mourn, and to rejoice with them that rejoice; can it be an act of rational love to mourn for them that are possessed of the highest everlasting joys?

7. God will not honor himself by one only, but by many; he knoweth best when his work is done: when our friends have finished all that God intended them for when he put them into the world, is it not time for them to be gone, and for others to take their places, and finish their work also in their time? God will have a succession of his servants in the world. Would you not come down, and give place to him that is to follow you, when your part is played, and his is to begin? If David had not died, there had been no Solomon, no Jehoshaphat, no Hezekiah, no Josiah, to succeed him and honor God

in the same throne. You may as wisely grudge that one day only takes not up all the week, and that the clock striketh not the same hour still, but proceedeth from one to two, from two to three, &c. as to murmur that one man only continueth not, to do the work of his place, excluding his successors.

8. You must not have all your mercies by one messenger or hand: God will not have you confine your love to one only of his servants; and therefore he will not make one only useful to you: but when one hath delivered his message and done his part, perhaps God will send you other mercies by another hand; and it belongeth to him to choose the messenger who gives the gift. And if you will childishly dote upon the first messenger, and say you will have all the rest of your mercies by his hand, or you will have no more, your frowardness more deserveth correction than compassion; and if you be kept fasting till you can thankfully take your food, from any hand that your Father sends it by, it is a correction very suitable to your sin.

9. Do you so highly value your friends for God, or for them, or for yourselves, in the final consideration? If it was for God, what reason of trouble have you, that God hath disposed of them according to his wisdom and unerring will? Should you not then be more pleased that God hath them, and employeth them in his highest service, than displeased that you want them?

But if you value them and love them for themselves, they are now more lovely when they are more perfect; and they are now fitter for your content and joy, when they have themselves unchangeable content and joy, than they could be in their sin and sorrows.

But if you valued and loved them but for yourselves only, it is just with God to take them from you, to teach you to value men to higher ends, and upon better considerations; and both to prefer God before yourselves, and better to understand the nature of true friendship, and better to know that your own felicity is not in the hands of any creature, but of God alone.

10. Did you improve your friends while you had them; or did you only love them, while you made but little use of them for your souls? If you used them not, it was just with God for all your love to take them from you. They were given you as your candle, not only to love it, but to work by the light of it; and as your garments, not only to love them, but to wear them; and as your meat, not only to love it, but to feed upon it. Did you receive their counsel, and hearken to their reproofs, and pray with them, and confer with them upon those holy truths that tended to elevate your minds to God, and to inflame your breasts with sacred love? If not, be it now known to you, that God gave you not such helps and mercies only

to talk of, or look upon and love, but also to improve for the benefit of your souls.

11. Do you not seem to forget both where you are yourselves, and where you must shortly and for ever live? Where would you have your friends, but where you must be yourselves? Do you mourn that they are taken hence? Why, if they had staid here a thousand years, how little of that time should you have had their company? When you are almost leaving the world yourselves, would you not send your treasure before you to the place where you must abide? How quickly will you pass from hence to God, where you shall find your friends that you lamented as if they had been lost, and there shall dwell with them for ever! O foolish mourners! would you not have your friends at home! at their home and your home, with their Father and your Father; their God and your God! Shall you not there enjoy them long enough? Can you so much miss them for one day, that must live with them to all eternity? And is not eternity long enough for you to enjoy your friends in?

Obj. But I do not know whether ever I shall there have any distinct knowledge of them, or love to them, and whether God shall not there be so far all in all, as that we shall need or fetch no comfort from the creature.

Answ. There is no reason for either of these doubts. For, 1. You cannot justly think that

the knowledge of the glorified shall be more confused or imperfect than the knowledge of natural men on earth. We shall know much more, but not so much less. Heaven exceedeth earth in knowledge, as much as it doth in joy.

2. The angels in heaven have now a distinct particular knowledge of the least believers; rejoicing particularly in their conversion, and being called by Christ himself "their angels." Therefore when we shall be equal to the angels, we shall certainly know our nearest friends that there dwell with us, and are employed in the same attendance.

3. Abraham knew the rich man in hell, and the man knew Abraham and Lazarus: therefore we shall have as distinct a knowledge.

4. The two disciples knew Moses and Elias in the mount, whom they had never seen before: though it is possible Christ told them who they were, yet there is no such thing expressed: and therefore it is as probable that they knew them by the communication of their irradiating glory. Much more shall we be then illuminated to a clearer knowledge.

5. It is said expressly, 1 Cor. xiii. 10—12. that our present knowledge shall be done away only in regard of its imperfection; and not of itself, which shall be perfected: "When that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away;" as we put away childish thoughts and speeches, when we become

men: the change will be from “ seeing in a glass” to “ seeing face to face;” and from “ knowing in part” to “ knowing even as we are known.”

II. And that we shall both know, and love and rejoice in creatures even in heaven, notwithstanding that God is all in all, appeareth further thus.—

1. Christ in his glorified humanity is a creature: and yet there is no doubt but all his members will there know and love him in his glorified humanity, without any derogation from the glory of the Deity.

2. The body of Christ will continue its unity, and every member will be so nearly related, even in heaven, that they cannot choose but know and love each other. Shall we be ignorant of the members of our body; and not be concerned in their felicity with whom we are so nearly one?

3. The state and felicity of the church hereafter, is frequently described in scripture as consistent in society. It is a kingdom, the city of God, the heavenly Jerusalem: and it is mentioned as part of our happiness to be of that society. Heb. xii. 22—24, &c.

4. The saints are called kings themselves: and it is said that they shall judge the world, and the angels (and judging in scripture is frequently put for governing: therefore, whether there will be another world of mortals which

they shall govern as angels now govern men; or whether the misery of damned men and angels will partly consist in as base a subjection to the glorified saints, as dogs now have to men, or wicked reprobates on earth to angels; or whether in respect of both these together the saints shall then be kings, and rule and judge; or whether it be only the participation of the glory of Christ, that is called a kingdom, I will not here determine; but it is most clear that they will have a distinct particular knowledge of the world, which they themselves must judge; and some concernment in that work.

5. It is put into the description of the happiness of the saints, that they shall come from the east, and from the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the kingdom of God. Therefore they shall know them, and take some comfort in their presence.

6. Love (even to the saints as well as unto God) is one of the graces that shall endure for ever. 1 Cor. xiii. It is exercised upon an immortal object (the image and children of the Most High) and therefore must be one of the immortal graces. For grace in the nature of it dieth not: and therefore if the object cease not, how should the grace cease, unless you will call its perfecting a ceasing?

It is a state too high for such as we, and I think for any mere creature, to live so immediately and only upon God, as to have no use for

any fellow creature, nor no comfort in them. God can make use of glorified creatures, in such subserviency and subordination to himself, as shall be no diminution to his all-sufficiency or honor, nor to our glory and felicity. We must take heed of fancying even such a heaven itself, as is above the capacity of a creature; as some very wise divines think they have done, that tell us we shall immediately see God's essence (his glory being that which is provided for our intuition and felicity, and is distinct from his essence; being not every where as his essence is;) and as those do that tell us because that God will be all in all, therefore we shall there have none of our comfort by any creature. Though flesh and blood shall not enter into that kingdom, but your bodies will then be spiritual bodies, yet will they be really the same as now, and distinct from our souls; and therefore must have a felicity suitable to a body glorified: and if the soul did immediately see God's essence, yet as no reason can conclude that it can see nothing else, or that it can see even created good, and not love it, so the body however must have objects and felicity fit for a body.

Obj. But it is said, If we knew Christ after the flesh, henceforth know we him no more.

Ans. No doubt but all the carnality in principles, matter, manner and ends of our knowledge will then cease, as it is imperfection; but that a carnal knowledge be turned into a

spiritual, is no more a diminution to it, than it is to the glory of our bodies, to be made like the stars in the firmament of our Father.

Obj. But then I shall have no more comfort in my present friends than in any other.

Ans. 1. If you had none in them, it is no diminution to our happiness, if indeed we should have all in God immediately and alone. 2. But if you have as much in others that you never knew before, that will not diminish any of your comfort in your ancient friends. 3. But it is most probable to us, that as there is a two-fold object for our love in the glorified saints; one is their holiness, and the other is the relation which they stood in between God and us, being made his instruments for our conversion and salvation, so that we shall love saints in heaven in both respects: and in the first respect (which is the chiefest) we shall love those most that have most of God, and the greatest glory (though such as we never knew on earth;) and in the second respect we shall love those most that were employed by God for our greatest good.

And that we shall not there lay by so much respect to ourselves, as to forget or disregard our benefactors, is manifest, 1. In that we shall for ever remember Christ, and love him, and praise him, as one that formerly redeemed us, and washed us in his blood, and hath made us kings and priests to God: and therefore we may

also in just subordination to Christ, remember them, with love and thankfulness, that were his instruments for the collation of these benefits.

2. And this kind of self-love (to be sensible of good and evil to ourselves) is none of the sinful or imperfect selfishness to be renounced or laid by, but part of our very natures, and as inseparable from us as we are from ourselves.

Much more, were it not digressive, might be said on this subject; but I shall only add, that as God doth draw us to every holy duty by shewing us the excellency of that duty; and as perpetuity is not the smallest excellency; so he hath purposely mentioned that love endureth for ever (when he had described the love of one another) as a principal motive to kindle and increase this love. And therefore those that think they shall have no personal knowledge of one another, nor personal love to one another (for we cannot love personally, if we know not personally) do take a most effectual course to destroy in their souls all holy special love to saints, by casting away that principal or very great motive given them by the Holy Ghost. I am not able to love much where I foreknow that I shall not love long. I cannot love a comely inn, so well as a nearer dwelling of my own, because I must be gone to-morrow. Therefore must I love my Bible better than my law books, or physic books, &c. because it leadeth to eternity. And therefore I must love holiness in myself and others, better

than meat and drink, and wealth and honor, and beauty and pleasure; because it must be loved for ever, when the love of these must needs be transitory, as they are transitory. I must profess, from the very experience of my soul, that it is the belief that I shall love my friends in heaven, that principally kindleth my love to them on earth: and if I thought I should never love them after death, and consequently never love them more, when this life is ended, I should in reason number them with temporal things, and love them comparatively but a little; even as I love other transitory things (allowing for the excellency in the nature of grace.) But now I converse with some delight with my godly friends, as believing I shall converse with them for ever, and take comfort in the very dead and absent, as believing we shall shortly meet in heaven: and I love them, I hope, with a love that is of a heavenly nature, while I love them as the heirs of heaven, with a love which I expect shall there be perfected, and more fully and for ever exercised.

12. The last reason that I give you, to move you to bear the loss or absence of your friends, is, that it gives you the loudest call to retire from all the world, and to converse with God himself, and to long for heaven, where you shall be separated from your friends no more. And your forsaken state will somewhat assist you to that solitary converse with God, which it calls

you to.—But this brings us up to the third part of the text.

“ And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.” Doct. When all forsake us, and leave us (as to them) alone, we are far from being simply alone; because God is with us.

He is not without company, that is with the king, though twenty others have turned him off. He is not without light that hath the shining sun, though all his candles be put out. If God be our God, he is our all, and is enough for us: and if he be our all, we shall not much find the want of creatures while he is with us.

For 1. He is with us, who is every where, and therefore is never from us; and knoweth all the ways and projects of our enemies; being with them in wrath, as he is with us in mercy.

2. He is with us who is almighty, sufficient to preserve us, conquerable by none; and therefore while he is with us, we need not fear what man can do unto us: for they can do nothing but what he will: no danger, no sickness, no trouble or want can be so great as to make it any difficulty to God to deliver us when and how he please.

3. He is with us who is infinitely wise, and therefore we need not fear the subtilty of enemies; nor shall any of his undertaken works for his church or us miscarry for want of foresight, or through any oversight. We shall be preserved even from our own tolly, as well as from our

enemies' subtilty : for it is not our own wisdom that our greatest concernments do principally rest upon, nor that our safety and peace are chiefly secured by ; but it is the wisdom of our Great Preserver. He knoweth what to do with us, and what paths to lead us in, and what is best for us in all conditions. And he hath promised to teach us, and will be our sure infallible guide.

4. He is with us who is infinitely good, and therefore is only fit to be a continual delight and satisfaction to our souls : that hath nothing in him to disaffect us, or discourage us : whom we may love without fear of overloving ; and need not set any bounds to our love, the object of it being infinite.

5. He is with us, who is most nearly related to us, and most dearly loveth us ; and therefore will never be wanting to us in any thing that is fit for us to have. This is he that is with us, when all have left us, and as to man we are alone ; and therefore we may well say that we are not alone. Of this I shall say more anon in the application.

Quest. But how is he with us ? *Ans.* 1. He is with us not only in his essential presence, as he is every where, but as by his gracious fatherly presence. We are in his family, attending on him, even as the eye of a servant is to the hand of his master ; we are always with him, and (as he phraseth it himself in the parable, Luke xv.)

all that he hath is ours, that is, all that is fit to be communicated to us, and all the provisions of his bounty for his children. When we awake, we should be still with him; when we go abroad we should be always as before him: our life and works should be a walking with God.

2. He is always with us efficiently to do us good; though we have none else that careth for us, yet will he never cast us out of his care, but biddeth us cast our care on him, as promising that he will care for us. Though we have none else to provide for us, he is always with us, and our Father knoweth what we want, and will make the best provision for us. Matt. vi. 32, 33. Though we have none else to defend us against the power of our enemies, he is always with us to be our sure defence: he is the rock to which we fly, and upon which we are surely built. He gathereth us to himself as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. Matt. xxiii. 37. And sure while love is thus protecting us, we may well say that the Father himself is with us. Though in all our wants we have no other to supply us, yet he is still with us to perform his promise, that no good thing shall be wanting to them that fear him. Though we may have none else to strengthen and help us, and support us in our weakness, yet he is always with us, whose grace is sufficient for us, to manifest his strength in weakness. Though we have no other to teach us, and to resolve our doubts, yet he is with us

that is our chiefest master, and hath taken us to be his disciples, and will be our light and guide, and will lead us into the truth. Though we have none else to be our comforters, in our agony, darkness or distress; but all forsake us, or are taken from us, and we are exposed as Hagar with Ishmael in a wilderness; yet still the Father of all consolations is with us, his Spirit who is the comforter is in us: and he that so often speaketh the words of comfort to us in his gospel, and saith "Be of good cheer; let not your hearts be troubled, neither be afraid," &c. will speak them (in the season and measure which is fittest for them) unto our hearts. Though all friends turn enemies, and would destroy us, or turn false accusers, as Job's friends, in their ignorance or passion; though all of them should add affliction to our affliction, yet is our redeemer and justifier still with us, and will lay his restraining hand upon our enemies, and say to their proudest fury "Hitherto and no further shalt thou go." He is angry with Job's accusing friends, notwithstanding their friendship and good meaning, and though they seemed to plead for God and godliness against Job's sin: and who shall be against us while God is for us? or who shall condemn us when it is he that justifieth us? Though we be put to say as David, Ps. cxlii. 4. "I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my

soul:" yet we may say with him, ver. 5 and 7, "I cried unto thee, O Lord: I said, thou art my refuge, and my portion in the land of the living. Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me." 2, 3. "I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble: when my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path: in the way wherein I walked, have they privily laid a snare for me." Thus "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." Ps. xlv. 1. "Therefore should we not fear, though the earth were removed, and though the mountains were carried into the midst of the sea: though the waters thereof roar, and be troubled," &c. ver. 2, 3. Though as David saith, Ps. xli. 5—9. "Mine enemies speak evil of me; when shall he die, and his name perish? And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad he telleth it: all that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt. An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him: and now that he lieth, he shall rise up no more: yea, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, that did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel against me." Yet we may add as he, ver. 12. "And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face

for ever." Though as Ps. xxxv. 7, &c. "Without cause they have hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul." 11. "And false witnesses did rise up: they laid to my charge things that I knew not: they rewarded me evil for good." 15, 16. "In my adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear, and ceased not: with hypocritical mockers in feasts: they gnashed upon me with their teeth." 20. "For they speak not peace; but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land." Yet ver. 9. "My soul shall be joyful in the Lord; it shall rejoice in his salvation." 10. "All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee, who deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him; yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?" Though friends be far off, "the Lord is nigh to them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but the Lord delivereth him out of them all." Ps. xxxiv. 18, 19. "The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants; and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate." ver. 22. Therefore "I will be glad and rejoice in his mercy; for he hath considered my trouble, and hath known (and owned) my soul in adversity; and hath not shut me in the hand of the enemy. When my

life was spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength failed because of mine iniquity, and my bones were consumed: I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me. I was forgotten, and as a dead man out of mind: I was like a broken vessel. I heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. But I trusted in thee, O Lord: I said, thou art my God: my times are in thy hand: deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant: save me for thy mercies sake. O how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men! Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man; thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." Ps. xxxi. Thus God is with us when men are far from us, or against us: his people find by happy experience that they are not alone. Because he is nigh them, evil shall not come nigh them, unless as it worketh for their good. He is their hiding place to preserve them from trouble: the great water-floods shall not come nigh them: he will compass them about with songs of deliverance. Ps. xxxii. 6, 7.

3. And as God is with us thus relatively and efficiently, so also objectively for our holy converse. Wherever our friends are, God is still at hand to be the most profitable, honorable and delightful object of our thoughts. There is enough in him to take up all the faculties of my soul. He that is but in a well furnished library may find great and excellent employment for his thoughts many years together; and so may he that liveth in the open world, and hath all the visible works of God to meditate upon: but all this were nothing, if God were not the sense of books and creatures, and the matter of all these noble studies. He that is alone, and hath only God himself to study, hath the matter and sense of all the books and creatures in the world, to employ his thoughts upon. He never need to want matter for his meditation, that hath God to meditate on: he need not want matter of discourse (whether mental or vocal) that hath God to talk of, though he have not the name of any other friend to mention. All our affections may have in him the highest and most pleasant work. The soul of man cannot have a more sweet and excellent work than to love him: he wanteth neither work nor pleasure, that in his solitude is taken up in the believing contemplations of eternal love, and of all his blessed attributes and works. O then what happy and delightful converse may a believer have with God alone! He is always present,

and always at leisure to be spoken with; and always willing of our access and audience: he hath no interest cross to our felicity, which should move him to reject us (as worldly great ones often have). He never misunderstandeth us, nor chargeth that upon us which we were never guilty of. If we converse with men, their mistakes, and interests, and passions, and insufficiencies, do make the trouble so great, and the benefit so small, that many have become thereby weary of the world, or of human society, and have spent the rest of their days alone in desert places. Indeed so much of God as appears in men, so much is their converse excellent and delightful: and their's is the best that have most of God. But there is so much of vanity, and self, and flesh, and sin, in the most or all of us, as very much darkeneth our light, and dampeth the pleasure, and blasteth the fruit of our societies and converse. O how oft have I been solaced in God, when I found nothing but deceit and darkness in the world! How oft hath he comforted me, when it was past the power of man! How oft hath he relieved and delivered me, when all the help of man was vain! It hath been my stay and rest, to look to him, when the creature hath been a broken staff, and deceitful friends have been but as a broken tooth, or a foot that is out of joint, (as Solomon speaketh of confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble. Prov. xxv. 29.) Verily as the world

were but an horrid dungeon without the sun, so it were a howling wilderness, a place of no considerable employment or delight, were it not that in it we may live to God and do him service, and sometime be refreshed with the light of his countenance, and the communications of his love. But of this more anon.

Use 1. We see our example, and our encouragements. Let us now as followers of Christ, endeavour to imitate him in this, and to live upon God, when men forsake us, and to know that while God is with us, we are not alone, nor indeed forsaken while he forsakes us not.

I shall, 1. Shew you here negatively, what you must not do. 2. Affirmatively, what you must do; for the performance of your duty in this imitation of Christ.

1. You must not make this any preteuce for the undervaluing of your useful friends; nor for your unthankfulness for so great a benefit as a godly friend: nor for the neglect of your duty in improving the company and help of friends: two is better than one: the communion of saints, and help of those that are wise and faithful, is a mercy highly to be esteemed. And the undervaluing of it, is at least a sign of a declining soul.

2. You must not hence fetch any pretence to slight your friends, and disoblige them, or neglect any duty that you owe them, or any means therein necessary to the continuation of their friendship.

3. You must not causelessly withdraw from human society into solitude. A weariness of converse with men, is oft conjunct with a weariness of our duty: and a retiring voluntarily into solitude, when God doth not call or drive us thither, is oft but a retiring from the place and work which God hath appointed us: and consequently a retiring rather from God, than to God. Like some idle servants, that think they should not work so hard, because it is but worldly business, and think their masters deal not religiously by them, unless they let them neglect their labor, that they may spend more time in serving God: as if it were no serving God to be faithful in their master's service.

I deny not but very holy persons have lived in a state of retirement from human converse: in such cases as these it may become a duty, 1. In case of such persecution as at present leaveth us no opportunity of serving or honoring God so much in any other place or state.

2. In case that natural infirmity or disability or any other accident shall make one less serviceable to God and his church in society than he is in solitude.

3. In case he hath committed a sin so heinous and of indelible scandal and reproach, as that it is not fit for the servants of Christ any more to receive him into their local communion, though he repent: (for as to local communion, I think, such a case may be.)

4. In case a man through custom and ill company be so captivated to some fleshly lust, as that he is not able to bear the temptations that are found in human converse; but falleth by them into frequent heinous sinning: in this case the right hand or eye is rather to be parted with, than their salvation. And though a mere restraint by distance of temptations and opportunities of sinning, will not prove a man sanctified, nor save the soul that loveth the sin and fain would live in it; yet, 1. Grace may sometime appear in the strength and self-denial which is exercised in the very avoiding of temptations, when yet perhaps the person hath not strength enough to have stood against the temptation if it had not been avoided. And, 2. The distance of temptations, and opportunity of serious and frequent consideration, may be a means to help them to sincerity that want it.

5. In case a man by age or sickness find himself so near to death, as that he hath now a more special call to look after his present actual preparation, than to endeavour any more the good of others; and find withal, that solitude will help him in his preparations, his society being such as would but hinder him. In these five cases I suppose it lawful to retire from human converse into solitude.

But when there is no such necessity or call, it usually proceedeth from one of these vicious distempers: 1. From cowardice and fear of

suffering, when the soldiers of Christ do hide their heads, instead of confessing him before men.

2. From a laziness of mind and weariness of duty : when slothful unprofitable servants hide their talents, pretending their fear of the austerity of their Lord. It is easier to run away from our work, than do it : and to go out of the reach of ignorance, malice, contradiction and ungodliness, than to encounter them, and conquer them by truth and holy lives. So many persons as we converse with, so many are there to whom we owe some duty : and this is not so easy as it is to over-run our work, and to hide ourselves in some wilderness or cell, whilst others are fighting the battles of the Lord. 3. Or it may proceed from mere impatience : when men cannot bear the frown, and scorns, and violence of the ungodly, they fly from sufferings, which by patience they should overcome. 4. Or it may come from humour and mutability of mind, and discontent with one's condition : many retire from human converse to please a discontented passionate mind ; or expecting to find that in privacy, which in public they could not find, nor is any where to be found on earth. 5. And some do it in melancholy, merely to please a sick imagination, which is vexed in company, and a little easeth itself in living as the possessed man among the tombs. 6. And sometimes it proceedeth from self-ignorance, and an unhumbled state of a soul : when men think much better of them-

selves than others, they think they can more comfortably converse with themselves than with others; whereas if they well understood that they are the worst or greatest enemies, or troubles to themselves, they would more fear their own company than other men's: they would then consider what proud, and fleshly, and worldly, and selfish, and disordered hearts they are like to carry with them into their solitude, and there to be annoyed with from day to day: and that the nearest enemy is the worst, and the nearest trouble is the greatest.

These vices or infirmities carry many into solitude; and if they live where popish vanity may seduce them, they will perhaps imagine, that they are serving God, and entering into perfection, when they are but sinfully obeying their corruptions: and that they are advanced above others in degrees of grace, while they are pleasing a diseased fancy, and entering into a dangerous course of sin. No doubt but the duties of a public life are more in number, and greater in weight, and of more excellent consequence and tendency (even to the most public good, and greatest honor of God) than the duties of privacy or retirement. *Vir bonus est commune bonum.*—A good man is a common good. And (saith Seneca) “*Nulla essent communia nisi pars illorum pertineret ad singulos.*” If every one have not some share or interest in them, how are they common? Let me add these few considerations,

to shew you the evil of voluntary unnecessary solitude.

1. You less contribute to the honor of your Redeemer, and less promote his kingdom in the world, and less subserve his death and office, while you do good but to few, and live but almost to yourselves.

2. You live in the poorest exercise of the grace of charity; and therefore in a low undesirable condition.

3. You will want the communion of saints, and benefit of public ordinances (for I account not a college life a solitary life:) and you will want the help of the charity, graces, and gifts of others, by which you might be benefitted.

4. It will be a life of smaller comfort, as it is a life of smaller benefit to others. They that do but little good (according to their ability) must expect but little comfort. They have usually most peace and comfort to themselves, that are the most profitable to others. “*Non potest quisquam bene degere qui se tantum intuetur: alteri vivas oportet, si tibi vis vivere.*” Sen.—“No man can live well, that looketh but to himself: thou must live to another, if thou wilt live to thyself.”

O the delight that there is in doing good to many! None knoweth it that hath not tried it: not upon any account of merit; but as it pleaseth God, and as goodness itself is amiable and sweet; and as we receive by communi-

eating; and as we are under promise; and as charity makes all the good that is done to another to be to us as our own!

5. We are dark, and partial, and heedless of ourselves, and hardly brought or kept in acquaintance with our hearts; and therefore have the more need of the eye of others: and even an enemy's eye may be useful, though malicious; and may do us good while he intends us evil: saith Bernard "*Malum quod nemo videt nemo arguit: ubi autem non timetur reprehensor, securus accedit tentator; licentius perpetratur iniquitas.*"—"The evil that none seeth, none reproveth: and where the reproveth is not feared, the tempter cometh more boldly, and the sin is committed the more licentiously." It is hard to know the spots in our own faces, when we have no glass or beholder to acquaint us with them. Saith Chrysostome, "*Solitude is velamen omnium vitiorum*—the cover of all vices." In company this cover is laid aside, and vice being more naked, is more ashamed. It is beholders that cause shame; which solitude is not acquainted with: and it is a piece of impenitency not to be ashamed of sin.

6. And we are for the most part so weak and sickly, that we are unable to subsist without the help of others. Sen. "*Nemo est ex imprudentibus qui relinqui sibi debet*"—"unwise men (or infants, or sick-like men) must not be left to themselves." And God hath let some impos-

tency, insufficiency, and necessity upon all, that should keep men sociable, and make them acknowledge their need of others, and be thankful for assistance from them, and be ready to do good to others, as we would have others do to us. He that feeleth not the need of others, is so unhumbled as to have the greater need of them.

7. Pride will have great advantage in private, and repentance great disadvantage, while our sins seem to be all dead, because there is not a temptation to draw them out, or an observer to reprove them. “*Tam diu patiens quisquam sibi videtur & humilis, donec nullius hominum consortio commiscetur; ad naturam pristinam reversurus quum interpellaverit cujuslibet occasionis commotio,*” inquit *Cassianus*—“Many a man seems to himself patient and humble, while he keeps out of company; who would return to his own nature if the commotion of any occasion did but provoke him.” It is hard to know what sin or grace is in us, if we have not such trials as are not to be found in solitude.

8. Flying from the observation and judgment of others, is a kind of self-accusation; as if we confessed ourselves so bad as that we cannot stand the trial of the light. “*Bona conscientia turbans advocat: mala in solitudine anxia est & sollicita: si honesta sunt quæ facis, omnes sciant: si turpia, quid refert neminem scire: cum tu scias! O te miserum si contemnis hunc testem:*” inquit *Seneca*,

That is, “ A good conscience will call in the crowd” (or witnesses, not caring who seeth): “ a bad conscience is anxious and solicitous even in solitude: if they be things honest which thou dost, let all men know: if they be dishonest, what good doth it thee that no man else knoweth it, when thou knowest it thyself! O miserable man, if thou despise this witness!” Something is suspected to be amiss with those that are always in their chambers, and are never seen. Tell not men that you cannot bear the light: it is he that doth evil that hateth the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.

9. Solitude is too like to death, to be desirable: he liveth that doth good; and he is dead that is useless. “ *Vivit is qui multis usui est: vivit is qui sentitur: qui vero latitant & torpent, mortem suam antecesserint,*” inquit Sen.—“ He liveth that is profitable to many: he liveth that is observed or perceived: but they that lie hid and drowsy do anticipate their death.” And it is the most culpable death, and therefore the worst, to have life and not to use it.

10. A life of holy communion is likest unto heaven, where none shall be solitary, but all as members of the heavenly Jerusalem, shall in harmony love and praise their maker.

These reasons seem to me sufficient to satisfy you that no man should choose a solitude without a special necessity or call: nor yet should it

be taken for a life of greater perfection, than a faithful serving of God in public, and doing good to more.

I shall now come to the affirmative, and tell you for all this, that If God call us into solitude, or men forsake us, we may rejoice in this, that we are not alone, but the Father is with us. Fear not such solitude, but be ready to improve it, if you be cast upon it. If God be your God, reconciled to you in Christ, and his Spirit be in you, you are provided for solitude, and need not fear if all the world should cast you off. If you be banished, imprisoned, or left alone, it is but a relaxation from your greatest labors; which though you may not cast off yourselves, you may lawfully be sensible of your ease, if God take off your burden. It is but a cessation from your sharpest conflicts, and removal from a multitude of great temptations. And though you may not cowardly retreat or shift yourselves from the fight and danger, yet if God will dispense with you, and let you live in greater peace and safety, you have no cause to murmur at his dealing. A fruit tree that groweth by the high-way side, doth seldom keep its fruit to ripeness, while so many passengers have each his stone or cudgel to cast at it: Seneca could say "*Nunquam a turba mores quos extuli refero: aliquid ex eo quod composui turbatur; aliquid ex his quæ fugati redit: inimica est multorum conversatio.*" "I never bring home well from a crowd the manners which

I took out with me: something is disordered of that which I had set in order: something of that which I had banished doth return: the conversation of many I find an enemy to me." O how many vain and foolish words corrupt the minds of those that converse with an ungodly world, when your ears and minds who live in solitude, are free from such temptations! You live not in so corrupt an air as they; you hear not the filthy ribald speeches, which fight against modesty and chastity, and are the bellows of lust: you hear not the discontented complaining words of the impatient; nor the passionate provoking words of the offended; nor the wrangling quarrelsome words of the contentious; nor the censorious, or slanderous, or reproachful words of the malicious, who think it their interest to have their brethren taken to be bad, and to have others hate them, because they themselves hate them; and who are as zealous to quench the charity of others, when it is destroyed in themselves, as holy persons are zealous to provoke others to love, which dwelleth and ruleth in themselves. In your solitude with God, you shall not hear the lies and malicious revilings of the ungodly against the generation of the just: nor the subtle cheating words of heretics, who being themselves deceived, would deceive others of their faith, and corrupt their lives. You shall not there be distracted with the noise and clamours of contending uncharitable professors of

religion, endeavouring to make odious first the opinions, and then the persons of one another: one saying, here is the church, and another, there is the church: one saying, this is the true church government, and another saying, nay, but that is it: one saying, God will be worshipped thus, and another, not so, but thus or thus: you shall not there be drawn to side with one against another, nor to join with any faction, or be guilty of divisions: you shall not be troubled with the oaths and blasphemies of the wicked, nor with the imprudent miscarriages of the weak; with the persecutions of enemies, or the falling out of friends: you shall not see the cruelty of proud oppressors, that set up lies by armed violence, and care not what they say or do, nor how much other men are injured or suffer, so that themselves may tyrannise, and their wills and words may rule the world, when they do so unhappily rule themselves. In your solitude with God, you shall not see the prosperity of the wicked to move you to envy, nor the adversity of the just to be your grief: you shall see no worldly pomp and splendour to befool you, nor adorned beauty to entice you, nor wasting calamities to afflict you: you shall not hear the laughter of fools, nor the sick man's groans, nor the wronged man's complaints, nor the poor man's murmurings, nor the proud man's boastings, nor the angry man's abusive ragings. As you lose the help of your gracious friends, so

you are freed from the fruits of their peevishness and passions; of their differing opinions and ways and tempers; of their inequality, unsuitableness, and contrariety of minds or interests; of their levity and inconstancy, and the powerful temptations of their friendship, to draw you to the errors or other sins which they are tainted with themselves. In a word, you are there half delivered from the VANITY AND VEXATION of the world; and were it not that you are yet undelivered from yourselves, and that you take distempered corrupted hearts with you, O what a felicity would your solitude be! But, alas, we cannot overrun our own diseases, we must carry with us the remnants of our corrupted nature; our deadness, and dulness, our selfishness and earthly minds, our impatience and discontents; and worst of all, our lamentable weakness of faith and love and heavenly-mindedness, and our strangeness to God, and backwardness to the matters of eternal life. O that I could escape these, though I were in the hands of the cruellest enemies! O that such a heart could be left behind! How gladly would I overrun both house, and land, and honor, and all sensual delights, that I might but overrun it! O where is the place where there is none of this darkness, nor disaffection, nor distance, nor estrangedness from God! O that I knew it! O that I could find it! O that I might there dwell! though I should never more see the face of mortals; nor

ever hear a human voice, nor ever taste of the delights of flesh! Alas, foolish soul! such a place there is, that hath all this and more than this: but it is not in a wilderness, but in paradise, not here on earth, but above with Christ! And yet am I so loth to die? yet am I no more desirous of the blessed day, when I shall be unclothed of flesh and sin? O death, what an enemy art thou even to my soul! By affrighting me from the presence of my Lord, and hindering my desires and willingness to be gone, thou wrongest me much more, than by laying my flesh to rot in darkness. Fain I would know God, and fain I would more love him and enjoy him: but O this hurtful love of life! O this unreasonable fear of dying, detaineth my desires from pressing on to the happy place where all this may be had! O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of death! this carnal unbelieving heart, that sometime can think more delightfully of a wilderness than of heaven; that can go seek after God in desert solitude, among the birds and beasts and trees, and yet is so backward to be loosed from flesh that I may find him and enjoy him in the world of glory! Can I expect that heaven come down to earth! and that the Lord of glory should remove his court, and either leave the retinue of his celestial courtiers, or bring them all down into this drossy world of flesh and sin, and this to satisfy my fleshly foolish mind! Or can I

expect the translation of Enoch or the chariot of Elias? Is it not enough that my Lord hath conquered death, and sanctified the passage, and prepared the place of my perpetual abode!

Well! for all this, though a wilderness is not heaven, it shall be sweet and welcome for the sake of heaven, if thence I may but have a clearer prospect of it: and if by retiring from the crowd and noise of folly I may but be more composed and better disposed to converse above, and to use my faith (alas! my too weak languid faith) until the beatifical vision and fruition come. If there may be but more of God, or readier access to him, or more heart-quickenings flames of love, or more heart-comforting intimations of his favour, in a wilderness than in a city, in a prison than in a palace, let that wilderness be my city, and let that prison be my palace, while I must abide on earth. If in solitude I may have Enoch's walk with God, I shall in due season have such a translation as shall bring me to the same felicity which he enjoyeth: and in the mean time as well as after, it is no incommodity, if by mortal eyes I be seen no more. If the chariot of contemplation will in solitude raise me to more believing affectionate converse with heaven, than I could expect in tumults and temptations, it shall reconcile me unto solitude, and make it my paradise on earth, till angels instead of the chariot of Elias, shall convey me to the pre-

sence of my glorified Head, in the celestial paradise.

Object. But it is grievous to one that hath been used to much company, to be alone.

Answ. Company may so use you, that it may be more grievous to you not to be alone. The society of wasps and serpents may be spared; and bees themselves have such stings as make some that have felt them think they bought the honey dear.

But can you say you are alone while you are with God? Is his presence nothing to you? Doth it not signify more than the company of all men in the world? saith Hierome, “ *Sapiens nunquam solus esse potest: habet enim secum omnes qui sunt, & qui fuerunt boni—& si hominum sit inopia, loquitur cum Deo,*” viz. “ A wise man cannot be alone: for he hath with him the good men that are or have been—and if there be a want of men, he speaks with God.” He should rather have said, There can be no want of man, when we may speak with God: and were it not that God is here revealed to us as in a glass, and that we do converse with God in man, we should think human converse little worth.

Object. O but solitude is disconsolate to a sociable mind.

Answ. But the most desirable society is no solitude: saith Hierome, “ *Infiuta eremi castitas te terret? sed tu parad̄isum mente deambula: quotiescunque cogitatione ac mente illuc conscen-*

deris, toties in eremo non eris:” that is, “ Doth the infinite vastness of the wilderness terrify thee? But do thou (ascend) in mind and walk in paradise: as oft as thou ascendest thither in thought and mind, so oft thou shalt not be in the wilderness.” If God be nothing to thee, thou art not a christian but an atheist. If God be God to thee, he is all in all to thee; and then should not his presence be instead of all? O that I might get one step nearer unto God, though I receded many from all the world! O that I could find that place on earth where a soul may have nearest access unto him, and fullest knowledge and enjoyment of him, though I never more saw the face of friends! I should cheerfully say, with my blessed Saviour, “ I am not alone, for the Father is with me.” And I should say so for these reasons following.

1. If God be with me, the maker, and ruler, and disposer of all is with me: so that all things are virtually with me in him. I have that in gold and jewels which I seem to want in silver, lead and dross. I can want no friend if God vouchsafe to be my friend; and I can enjoy no benefit by all my friends, if God be my enemy: I need not fear the greatest enemies, if God be reconciled to me. I shall not miss the light of the candle, if I have this blessed sun. The creature is nothing but what it is from God, and in God: and it is worth nothing, or good for nothing, but what it is worth in order unto God,

as it declareth him, and helps the soul to know him, serve him, or draw nearer to him. As it is idolatry in the unhappy worldling, to thirst after the creature with the neglect of God, and so to make the world his God; so doth it savour of the same heinous sin to lament our loss of creatures more than the displeasure of God. If God be my enemy, or I am fallen under his indignation, I have then so much greater matters to lament than the loss, or absence, or frowns of man, as should almost make me forget that there is such a thing as man to be regarded: but if God be my Father, and my friend in Christ, I have then so much to think of with delight, and to recreate and content my soul, as will proclaim it most incongruous and absurd to lament inordinately the absence of a worm, while I have his love and presence who is all in all. If God cannot content me, and be not enough for me, how is he then my God; or how shall he be my heaven and everlasting happiness?

2. If God be with me, he is with me to whom I am absolutely devoted. I am wholly his, and have acknowledged his interest in me, and long ago disclaimed all usurpers, and repented of alienations, and unreservedly resigned myself to him: and where should I dwell but with him that is my owner, and with whom I have made the solemnest covenant that ever I made? I never gave myself to any other, but in subordination to him, and with a salvo for his highest

inviolable right. Where should my goods be but in my own house? With whom should a servant dwell but with his master; and a wife but with her husband; and children but with their father? I am nearer related to my God and to my Saviour, than I am to any of my relations in this world. I owe more to him than to all the world: I have renounced all the world, as they stand in any competition or comparison with him: and can I want their company then while I am with him? How shall I hate father and mother, and wife and children, and brother and sister for his sake, if I cannot spare them, or be without them to enjoy him? To hate them is but to use them as men do hated things, that is, to cast them away with contempt as they would alienate me from Christ, and to cleave to him, and be satisfied in him alone. I am now married to Christ, and therefore must cheerfully leave father and mother, and my native place, and all to cleave to him: and with whom should I now delight to dwell, but with him who hath taken me into so near relation, to be, as it were, one flesh with him! O my dear Lord, hide not thou thy face from an unkind an unworthy sinner! Let me but dwell with thee and see thy face, and feel the gracious embracements of thy love, and then let me be cast off by all the world, if thou see it meetest for me; or let all other friends be where they will, so that my soul may be with thee. I have agreed for thy sake to

forsake all, even the dearest that shall stand against thee; and I resolve by thy grace to stand to this agreement.

3. If God be with me I am not alone, for he is with me that loveth me best. The love of all the friends on earth is nothing to his love. O how plainly hath he declared that he loveth me, in the strange condescension, the sufferings, death, and intercession of his Son! What love hath he declared in the communications of his Spirit, and the operations of his grace, and the near relations into which he brought me! What love hath he declared in the course of his providences; in many and wonderful preservations and deliverances; in the conduct of his wisdom, and in a life of mercies! What love appeareth in his precious promises, and the glorious provisions he hath made for me with himself to all eternity! O my Lord, I am ashamed that thy love is so much lost; that it hath no better return from an unkind unthankful heart; that I am not more delighted in thee, and swallowed up in the contemplation of thy love! I can contentedly let go the society and converse of all others, for the converse of some one bosom friend, that is dearer to me than they all, as Jonathan to David; and can I not much more be satisfied in thee alone, and let go all if I may continue with thee? My very dog will gladly forsake all the town, and all persons in the world, to follow me alone; and have I not yet

found so much love and goodness in thee my dear and blessed God, as to be willing to converse alone with thee? All men delight most in the company of those that love them best: they choose not to converse with the multitude when they look for solace and content, but with their dearest friends: and should any be so dear to me as God? O were not thy love unworthily neglected by an unthankful heart, I should never be so unsatisfied in thee, but should take up, or seek my comforts in thee: I should then say, whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee! Though not only my friends, but my flesh and heart themselves should fail me, it is thou that will still be the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever: it is good therefore for me to draw near to thee, how far soever I am from man: O let me there dwell where thou wilt not be strange, for thy loving kindness is better than life: instead of the multitude of my turmoiling thoughts, let me be taken up in the believing views of thy reconciled face, and in the glad attendance upon thy grace: or at least in the multitude of my thoughts within me, let thy celestial comforts delight my soul. Let me dwell as in thy family; and when I awake, let me be still with thee! Let me go no whither but where I am still following thee: let me do nothing but thy work, nor serve any other but when I may truly call it a serving thee: let me

hear nothing but thy voice, and let me know thy voice by whatever instrument thou shalt speak: let me never see any thing but thyself and the glass that representeth thee, and the books in which I may read thy name: and let me never play with the outside, and gaze on words and letters as insignificant, and not observe thy name which is the sense. Whether it be in company or in solitude, let me be continually with thee: and do thou vouchsafe to hold me by my right hand: and guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me unto thy glory. Ps. lxxiii. 23,—28. Ps. lxiii. 3.

4. If God be with me I am not alone; for I shall be with him whose love is of greater use and benefit to me, than the love of all my friends in the world. Their love may perhaps be some little comfort, as it floweth from his: but it is his love by which and upon which I live. It is his love that gives me life and time, and health and food, and preservation; that gives me books and giveth me understanding; that giveth me provision, and saveth me from turning it to pernicious fleshliness and excess; that giveth me even my friends themselves, and saveth me from that abuse which might make them to me worse than enemies. The sun, the earth, the air is not so useful or needful to me as his love. The love of all my friends cannot make me well when I am sick: it cannot forgive the smallest of my sins; nor yet assure me of God's forgiveness:

it cannot heal the maladies of my soul, nor give a solid lasting peace to the conscience which is troubled : if all my friends stand about me when I am dying, they cannot take away the fears of death, nor secure my passage to everlasting life : death will be death still, and danger will be danger, when all my friends have done their best. But my Almighty friend is all-sufficient : he can prevent my sickness, or rebuke and cure it, or make it so good to me, that I shall thank him for it : he can blot out my transgressions, and forgive all my sin ; and justify me when the world and my conscience do condemn me : he can teach me to believe, to repent, to pray, to hope, to suffer, and to overcome : he can quiet my soul in the midst of trouble, and give me a well-grounded everlasting peace, and a joy which no man can take from me : he can deliver me from all the corruptions and distempers of my froward heart ; and ease me and secure me in the troublesome war which is daily managed in my breast : he can make it as easy a thing to die, as to lie down and take my rest when I am weary, or to undress me at night and go to bed : he can teach death to lay by its terrible aspect, and to speak with a mild and comfortable voice, and to bring me the joyfullest tidings that ever came into my ears ; and to preach to me the last and sweetest sermon, even the same that our Saviour preached on the cross, Luke xxiii. 43,

“ Verily I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with Christ in paradise.”

And is this the difference between the love of man and of God? And yet do I lament the loss of man! and yet am I so backward to converse with God, and to be satisfied in his love alone! Ah! my God, how justly mayest thou withhold that love which I thus undervalue, and refuse that converse which I have first refused, and turn me over to man, to silly man, to sinful man, whose converse I so much desire, till I have learnt by dear experience the difference between man and God, and between an earthly and an heavenly friend! Alas, have I not tried it oft enough, to have known it better before this day! Have I not oft enough found what man is in a time of trial! Have I not been told it over and over, and told it to the quick, by deceitful friends; by self-seeking friends; by mutable, erroneous, deceived, scandalous, backsliding friends; by proud and self-conceited friends; by passionate, quarrelsome, vexatious friends; by self-grieving troubled friends, that have but brought me all their calamities and griefs to be additions to my own; by tempting friends, that have drawn me to sin more effectually than enemies; by tender, faithful, but unable friends, that have but fetched fire from my calamities and sorrows to kindle their own, not equally sharing, but each one taking all

my trouble entirely to himself; that have been willing, but insufficient to relieve me, and therefore the greater was their love, the greater was their own and consequently mine affliction; that would have been with me, but could not; that would fain have eased my pain and strengthened my languishing body, but could not; that would fain have removed all my troubles and comforted my cast down mind, but could not. O how often have I found that human friendship is a sweet desired addition to our woe; a beloved calamity, and an affliction which nature will not be without; not because it loveth evil, nor because it is wholly deceived in its choice, (for there is good in friendship, and delight in holy love) but because the good which is here accompanied with so much evil, is the beginning of a more high and durable friendship, and pointeth us up to the blessed delightful society and converse which in the heavenly Jerusalem we shall have with Christ!

But O how much better have I found the friendship of the all-sufficient God! His love hath not only pitied me, but relieved me: he hath not only been as it were afflicted with me in my afflictions, but he hath delivered me seasonably, and powerfully, and sweetly hath he delivered me: and when he had once told me that my afflictions were his own, I had no reason to doubt of a deliverance. My burdened mind hath been eased by his love, which was

but more burdened by the fruitless love of all my friends. Oft have I come to man for help, and ease, and comfort, and gone away as from an empty cistern, that had no water to cool my thirst; but God hath been a present help: could I but get near him, I was sure of light, how great soever was my former darkness: could I but get near him, I was sure of warming quickening life, how dead soever I had been before: but all my misery was that I could not get near him! My darkened, estranged, guilty soul, could not get quieting and satisfying acquaintance: my lumpish heart lay dead on earth, and would not stir, or quickly fell down again, if by any celestial force it began to be drawn up, and move a little towards him: my carnal mind was entangled in diverting vanities: and thus I have been kept from communion with my God. Kept, not by force or human tyranny, not by bars or bolts, or distance of place, or by the lowness of my condition; nor by any misrepresentations or reproach of man; but, alas! by myself, by the darkness, and deadness, and sluggishness, and earthliness, and fleshliness, and passions of a naughty heart. These have been my bars, and bolts, and jailers: these are they that have kept me from my God. Had it not been for these I might have got nearer to him; I might have walked with him, and dwelt with him; yea, dwelt in him, and he in me: and then I should

not have missed any friends, nor felt mine enemies. And is it my sinful distance from my God that hath been my loss, my wilderness, my woe! And is it a nearer admittance to the presence of his love that must be my recovery and my joy, if ever I attain to joy! O then, my soul, lay hold on Christ the reconciler, and in him and by him draw near to God; and cease from man whose breath is in his nostrils! Love God in his saints, and delightfully converse with Christ in them, while thou hast opportunity; but remember thou livest not upon them, or on their love, but upon God: and therefore desire their company but for his: and if thou have his, be content if thou have not their's. He wants not man that enjoyeth God. Gather up all the love, and thoughts, and desires, which have been scattered and lost upon the creatures, and set them all on God himself, and press into his presence, and converse with him, and thou shalt find the mistake of thy present discontents, and sweet experience shall tell thee thou hast made a happy change.

5. If God be with me, I am not alone, because he is with me with whom my greatest business lieth: and what company should I desire, but their's with whom I have my daily necessary work to do? I have more to do with God, than with all the world: yea, more and greater business with him in one day, than with all the world in all my life. I have business with man

about house, or lands, or food, or raiment, or labor, or journeying, or recreations; about society and public peace; but what are these to my business with God! Indeed, with holy men I have holy business; but that is but as they are messengers from God, and come to me on his business, and so they must be dearly welcome: but even then my business is much more with God than with them; with him that sent them, than with the messenger. Indeed, my business with God is so great, that if I had not a mediator to encourage and assist me to do my work, and procure me acceptance, the thoughts of it would overwhelm my soul.

O therefore, my soul, let man stand by: it is the eternal God that I have to do with; and with whom I am to transact in this little time the business of my endless life. I have to deal with God through Christ, for the pardon of my sins, of all my great and grievous sins; and woe to me, if I speed not, that ever I was born: I have some hopes of pardon, but intermixed with many perplexing fears: I have evidences much blotted, and not easily understood: I want assurance that he is indeed my Father, and reconciled to me, and will receive me to himself when the world forsaketh me: I have many languishing graces to be strengthened; and alas, what radicated, obstinate, vexatious corruptions to be cured! Can I look into my heart, into such an unbelieving, dead, and earthly heart,

into such a proud, and peevish, and disordered heart, into such a trembling, perplexed, self-accusing heart, and yet not understand how great my business is with God? Can I peruse my sins, or feel my wants, and sink under my weaknesses, and yet not discern how great my business is with God? Can I look back upon all the time that I have lost, and all the grace that I unthankfully resisted, and all the mercies that I trod under foot, or fooled away, and can I look before me and see how near my time is to an end, and yet not understand how great my business is with God? Can I think of the malice and diligence of Satan, the number, power and subtlety of mine enemies, the many snares and dangers that are still before me, the strength and number of temptations, and my ignorance, unwatchfulness and weakness to resist, and yet not know that my greatest business is with God? Can I feel my afflictions and lament them, and think my burden greater than I can bear, and find that man cannot relieve me; can I go mourning in the heaviness of my soul, and water my bed with tears, and fill the air with my groans and lamentations, or feel my soul overwhelmed within me, so that my words are intercepted, and I am readier to break than speak, and yet not perceive that my greatest business is with God? Can I think of dying; can I draw near to judgment; can I think of everlasting joys in heaven, and of everlasting pains in

hell, and yet not feel that my greatest business is with God? O then, my soul, the case is easily resolved, with whom it is that thou must most desirously and seriously converse. Where shouldst thou be but where thy business is, and so great business! Alas, what have I to do with man! What can it do but make my head ache, to hear a deal of senseless chat, about preferments, lands and dignities; about the words and thoughts of men, and a thousand toys that are utterly impertinent to my great employments, and signify nothing but that the dreaming world is not awake! What pleasure is it to see the bustles of a bedlam world? What a stir they make to prove or make themselves unhappy! How low and of how little weight, are the learned discourses about syllables and words, and names and notions, and mood and figure, yea or about the highest planets, when all are not referred unto God! Were it not that some converse with men, doth further my converse with God; and that God did transact much of his business by his messengers and servants, it were no matter whether ever I more saw the face of man: were it not that my Master hath placed me in society, and appointed me much of my work for others, and with others, and much of his mercy is conveyed by others, man might stand by, and solitude were better than the best society, and God alone should take me up. O nothing is so much my misery and shame, as that I am no more

willing, nor better skilled in the management of my great important business! that my work is with God, and my heart is no more with him! O what might I do in holy meditation, or prayer one hour, if I were as ready for prayer, and as good at prayer, as one that hath so long opportunity and so great necessity to converse with God, should be! A prayerless heart, a heart that flieth away from God, is most inexcusable in such a one as I, that hath so much important business with him: it is work that must be done; and if well done, will never be repented of. I use not to return from the presence of God (when indeed I have drawn near him) as I do from the company of empty men, repenting that I have lost my time, and trembled that my mind is discomposed or depressed by the vanity and earthly savour of their discourse: I oft repent that I have prayed to him so coldly, and conversed with him so negligently, and served him so remissly; but I never repent of the time, the care, the affections or the diligence employed in his holy work. Many a time I have repented that ever I spent so much time with man; and wished I had never seen the faces of some that are eminent in the world, whose favor and converse others are ambitious of: but it is my grief and shame that so small a part of all my life, hath been spent with God; and that fervent prayer and heavenly contemplations, have been so seldom and so short. O that I had lived more with

God, though I had been less with the dearest of my friends ! How much more sweet then would my life have been ! How much more blameless, regular and pure ! How much more fruitful, and answerable to my obligations and professions ! How much more comfortable to my review ! How many falls, and hurts, and wounds, and griefs, and groans might I have escaped ! O how much more pleasing is it now to my remembrance, to think of the hours in which I have lain at the feet of God, though it were in tears and groans, than to think of the time which I have spent in any common converse with the greatest, or the learnedst, or the dearest of my acquaintance !

And as my greatest business is with God, so my daily business is also with him : he purposely leaveth me under wants, and suffers necessities daily to return, and enemies to assault me, and affliction to surprise me, that I may be daily driven to him : he loveth to hear from me : he would have me be no stranger with him : I have business with him every hour : I need not want employment for all the faculties of my soul, if I know what it is to converse in heaven. Even prayer, and every holy thought of God, hath an object so great and excellent, as should wholly take me up. Nothing must be thought or spoken lightly about the Lord : his name must not be taken in vain : nothing that is common beseemeth his worshippers. He will be sanctified of

all that shall draw near him: he must be loved with all the heart and might: his servants need not be wearied for want of employment, nor through the lightness or unprofitableness of their employment. If I had cities to build, or kingdoms to govern, I might better complain for want of employment for the faculties of my soul, than I can when I am to converse in heaven. In other studies the delight abateth when I have reached my desire, and know all that I can know; but in God there is infinitely more to be known when I know the most. I am never satiated with the easiness of knowing, nor are my desires abated by any unusefulness or unworthiness in the object; but I am drawn to it by its highest excellencies, and drawn on to desire more and more by the infiniteness of the light which I have not yet beheld, and the infiniteness of the good which yet I have not enjoyed. If I be idle, or seem to want employment when I am to contemplate all the attributes, relations, mercies, works, and revealed perfections of the Lord, it is sure for want of eyes to see, or a heart inclined to my business. If God be not enough to employ my soul, then all the persons and things on earth are not enough.

And when I have infinite goodness to delight in, where my soul may freely let out itself, and never need to fear excess of love, how sweet should this employment be! As knowledge, so love is never stinted here, by the narrowness of

the object: we can never love him in any proportion either to his goodness and amiableness in himself, or to his love to us. What need have I then of any other company or business, when I have infinite goodness to delight in, and to love (further than they subserve this greatest work?)

Come home then, O my soul, to God: converse in heaven: turn away thine eyes from beholding vanity: let not thy affections kindle upon straw or briars, that go out when they have made a flash or noise, and leave thee to thy cold and darkness: but come and dwell upon celestial beauties, and make it thy daily and most diligent work, to kindle thy affections on the infinite everlasting Good; and then they will never be extinguished or decay for want of fuel; but the further they go, and the longer they burn, the greater will be the flame. Though thou find it hard while love is but a spark to make it burn, and complain that thy cold and backward heart is hardly warmed with the love of God, yet when the whole pile hath taken fire, and the flame ascendeth, fire will breed fire, love will cause love; and all the malice of hell itself shall never be able to suppress or quench it unto all eternity.

6. And it is a great encouragement to my converse with God, that no misunderstanding, no malice of enemies, no former sin or present frailty, no nor the infinite distance of the most

holy glorious God, can hinder my access to him, or turn away his ear or love, or interrupt my leave and liberty of converse. If I converse with the poor, their wants afflict me, being greater than I can supply : their complaints and expectations which I cannot satisfy, are my trouble. If I would converse with great ones, it is not easy to get access ; and less easy to have their favor, unless I would purchase it at too dear a rate : how strangely and contemptuously do they look at their inferiors ! Great friends must be made for a word or smile ; and if you be not quickly gone, they are weary of you : and if you seek any thing of them, or would put them to any cost or trouble, you are as welcome to them as so many vermin or noisome creatures. They please them best that drive you away. With how much labor and difficulty must you climb, if you will see the top of one of these mountains ! And when you are there, you are but in a place of barrenness ; and have nothing to satisfy you for your pains, but a larger prospect and vertiginous despect of the lower grounds which are not your own : it is seldom that these great ones are to be spoken with : and perhaps their speech is but a denial of your requests, if not some snappish and contemptuous rejection, that makes you glad when you are got far enough from them, and makes you the better like and love the accessible, calm and fruitful plains.

But O how much greater encouragements

hath my soul to converse with God! Company never hindereth him from hearkening to my suit: he is infinite and omnipotent, and as sufficient for every individual soul, as if he had no other to look after in the world: when he is taken up with the attendance and praises of his heavenly host, he is as free and ready to attend and answer the groans and prayers of a contrite soul, as if he had no nobler creatures, nor no higher service to regard. I am oft unready, but God is never unready: I am unready to pray, but he is not unready to hear: I am unready to come to God, to walk with him, and to solace my soul with him; but he is never unready to entertain me. Many a time my conscience would have driven me away, when he hath called me to him, and rebuked my accusing fearful conscience: many a time I have called myself a prodigal, a companion of swine, a miserable hard-hearted sinner, unworthy to be called his son, when he hath called me child, and chid me for my questioning his love. He hath readily forgiven the sins which I thought would have made my soul the fuel of hell: he hath entertained me with joy, with music and a feast, when I better deserved to have been among the dogs without his doors. He hath embraced me in his sustaining consolatory arms, when he might have spurned my guilty soul to hell, and said, Depart from me thou worker of iniquity, I know thee not. O little did I think that he could ever have forgotten

the vanity and villany of my youth; yea so easily have forgotten my most aggravated sins. When I had sinned against light; when I had resisted conscience; when I had frequently and wilfully injured love, I thought he would never have forgotten it: but the greatness of his love and mercy, and the blood and intercession of his Son, hath cancelled all. O how many mercies have I tasted since I thought I had sinned away all mercies! How patiently hath he born with me, since I thought he would never have put up more! And yet besides my sins and the withdrawings of my own heart, there hath been nothing to interrupt our converse. Though he be God, and I a worm, yet that would not have kept me out: though he be in heaven, yet he is near to succour me on earth, in all that I call upon him for: though he have the praise of angels, he disdaineth not my tears and groans: though he have the perfect love of perfect souls, he knoweth the little spark in my breast, and despiseth not my weak and languid love: though I injure and dishonor him by loving him no more; though I oft forget him, and have been out of the way when he hath come or called me; though I have disobediently turned away mine ears, and unkindly refused the entertainments of his love, and unfaithfully played with those whose company he forbid me, he hath not divorced me, nor turned me out of doors. O wonderful! that heaven will be familiar with

earth; and God with man! the Highest with a worm; and the most Holy with an unconstant sinner! Man refuseth me, when God will entertain me: man, that is no wiser or better than myself. Those that I never wronged or deserved ill of, reject me with reproach: and God whom I have unspeakably injured doth invite me, and intreat me, and condescendeth to me as if he were beholden to me to be saved: men that I have deserved well of, do abhor me; and God that I have deserved hell of, doth accept me. The best of them are briars, and as a thorny hedge; and he is love, and rest, and joy: and yet I can be more welcome to him, though I have offended him, than I can to them whom I have obliged: I have freer leave to cast myself into my Father's arms, than to tumble in those briars, or wallow in the dirt. I upbraid myself with my sins, but he doth not upbraid me with them: I condemn myself for them, but he condemns me not: he forgiveth me sooner than I can forgive myself: I have peace with him, before I can have peace of conscience.

O therefore my soul, draw near to him that is so willing of thy company! that frowneth thee not away, unless it be when thou hast fallen into the dirt, that thou mayest wash thee from thy filthiness, and be fitter for his converse. Draw near to him that will not wrong thee, by believing misreports of enemies, or laying to thy charge the things thou knewest not; but will

forgive the wrongs thou hast done to him, and justify thee from the sins that conscience layeth to thy charge. Come to him that by his word and Spirit, his ministers and mercies calleth thee to come; and hath promised that those that come to him he will in no wise shut out. O walk with him that will bear thee up, and lead thee as by the right hand, Ps. lxxiii. 23. and carry his infants when they cannot go! O speak to him that teacheth thee to speak, and understandeth and accepts thy stammering; and helpeth thine infirmities when thou knowest not what to pray for as thou oughtest; and giveth thee groans when thou hast not words, and knoweth the meaning of his Spirit in thy groans: that cannot be contained in the heaven of heavens, and yet hath respect to the contrite soul; that trembleth at his word, and feareth his displeasure: that pitieth the tears, and despiseth not the sighing of a broken heart, nor the desires of the sorrowful. O walk with him that is never weary of the converse of an upright soul; that is never angry with thee but for flying from him, or for drawing back, or being too strange, and refusing the kindness and felicity of his presence. The day is coming when the proudest of the sons of men would be glad of a good look from him that thou hast leave to walk with: even they that would not look on thee, and they that injured and abused thee, and they that inferiors could have no access to, O how glad would they

be then of a smile, or a word of hope and mercy from thy Father! Draw near then to him, on whom the whole creation doth depend; whose favour at last the proudest and the worst would purchase with the loudest cries, when all their pomp and pleasure is gone, and can purchase nothing. O walk with him that is love itself, and think him not unwilling or unlovely; and let not the deceiver by hideous misrepresentations drive thee from him: when thou hast felt awhile the storms abroad, methinks thou shouldst say, how good, how safe, how sweet is it to draw near to God!

7. With whom should I so desirously converse, as with him whom I must live with for ever? If I take pleasure in my house, or land, or country, my walks, my books, or friends themselves as clothed with flesh, I must possess this pleasure but a little while; henceforth know we no man after the flesh: had we known Christ himself after the flesh, we must know him so no more for ever (though his glorified spiritual body we shall know.) Do you converse with father or mother; with wives or children; with pastors and teachers? Though you may converse with these as glorified saints, when you come to Christ, yet in these relations that they stand in to you now, you shall converse with them but a little while: for the time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives, be as though they had none; and they that weep, as though they

wept not; and they that rejoyce, as though they rejoyced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it (or as though they used it not :) for the fashion of this world doth pass away. 1 Cor. vii. 29—31.

Why then should I so much regard a converse of so short continuance? Why should I be so familiar in my inn, and so in love with that familiarity, as to grieve when I must but think of leaving it, or talk of going home, and look forward to the place where I must dwell for ever? Shall I be fond of the company of a passenger that I travel with (yea perhaps one that doth but meet me in the way, and goeth to a contrary place) and shall I not take more pleasure to remember home? I will not be so uncivil as to deny those I meet a short salute, or to be friendly with my fellow travellers: but remember O my soul, that thou dost not dwell but travel here, and that it is thy Father's house where thou must abide for ever: yea and he is nearer thee than man (though invisible) even in thy way. O see him then that is invisible: hearken to him when he speaketh: obey his voice: observe his way: speak to him boldly, though humbly and reverently, as his child, about the great concernments of thy state: tell him what it is that aileth thee: and seeing all thy smart is the fruit of thy own sin, confess thy folly and unkindness, crave his forgiveness, and remember

him what his Son hath suffered, and for what : treat with him about thy future course : desire his grace, and give up thyself to his conduct and his cure : weep over in his ears the history of thy misdoings and unthankful course : tell it him with penitential tears and groans : but tell him also the advantage that he hath for the honoring of his grace, if it may now abound where sin aboundeth : tell him that thou art most offended with thyself, for that which he is most offended with : that thou art angry with thy disobedient unthankful heart : that thou art even weary of that heart that loveth him no more : and that it shall never please thee, till it love him better and be more desirous to please him : tell him of thy enemies, and crave the protection of his love : tell him of thy frailties, infirmities and passions, and crave not only his tender forbearance, but his help : tell him that without him thou canst do nothing ; and crave the grace that is sufficient for thee, that through him that strengtheneth thee thou mayest do all things : when thou fallest, despair not, but crave his helping hand to raise thee. Speak to him especially of the everlasting things, and thank him for his promises, and for thy hopes : for what thou shalt be and have and do among his holy ones for ever. Express thy joys in the promise of those joys ; that thou must see his glory, and love him and praise him better than thou canst now desire ! Begin those praises, and

as thou walkest with him, take pleasure in the mention of his perfections; be thankful to him and speak good of his name: solace thyself in remembering what a God, what a defence and portion all believers have; and in considering whither he is now conducting thee, and what he will do with thee, and what use he will make of thee for ever: speak with rejoicing of the glory of his works, and the righteousness of his judgments, and the holiness and evenness of his ways: sing forth his praises with a joyful heart, and pleasant and triumphing voice; and frown away all slavish fears, all importune malicious suggestions or doubts, all peevish hurtful nipping griefs, that would mar or interrupt the melody; and would untune or unstring a raised well composed soul. Thy Father loveth thy very moans and tears: but how much more doth he love thy thanks and praise? Or if indeed it be a winter time, a stormy day with thee, and he seem to chide or hide his face because thou hast offended him, let the cloud that is gathered by thy folly come down in tears, and tell him, thou hast sinned against heaven and before him, and art no more worthy to be called his son, but yet fly not from him, but beg his pardon and the privileges of a servant; and thou wilt find embraces, when thou fearest condemnation; and find that he is merciful and ready to forgive: only return, and keep closer to him for the time to come. If the breach through thy neglect be

gone so far, as that thou seemest to have lost thy God, and to be cast off, and left forsaken; despair not yet; for he doth but hide his face till thou repent: he doth not forsake thee, but only tell thee what it is to walk so carelessly as if thou wouldst forsake him: thou art faster and surer in his love and covenant than thou canst believe or apprehend. Thy Lord was as dear as ever to his Father, when he cried out, My God, why hast thou forsaken me. But yet neglect him not, and be not regardless of his withdrawals and of thy loss: lift up thy voice and cry but "Father;" in despite of unbelief, cry out "My Father, my Saviour, my God" and thou shalt hear him answer thee at last "My child:" cry out "O why dost thou hide thy face; and why hast thou forsaken me? O what shall I do here without thee! O leave me not, lose me not in this howling wilderness! Let me not be a prey to any ravening beast! to my sin, to Satan, to my foes and thine!" Lift up thy voice and weep, and tell him they are the tears and lamentations of his child: O beg of him, that thy wanderings and childish folly, may not be taken as acts of enmity, or at least that they may be pardoned; and though he correct thee, that he will return and not forsake thee, but still take thee and use thee as his child. Or if thou hast not words to pour out before him, at least smite upon thy breast, and though thou be ashamed or afraid to look up toward heaven, look down and

say "O Lord be merciful to me a sinner," and he will take it for an acceptable suit, that tendeth to thy pardon and justification, and will number such a sentence with the prayers which he cannot deny. Or if thou cry and canst not hear of him, and hast long called out upon thy Father's name, and hearest not his voice and hast no return, inquire after him of those thou meetest: ask for him of them that know him and are acquainted with his way! Make thy moan unto the watchmen; and ask them, where thou mayest find thy Lord: and at last he will appear to thee, and find thee first that thou mayest find him, and shew thee where it was that thou didst lose him, by losing thyself and turning from him! Seek him and thou shalt find him: wait and he will appear in kindness: for he never faileth or forsaketh those that wait upon him.

This kind of converse, O my soul, thou hast to prosecute with thy God. Thou hast also the concernments of all his servants; his afflicted ones, his broken hearted ones, his diseased ones, his persecuted ones, to tell him of: tell him also of the concernments of his kingdom, the fury of his enemies, the dishonor they cast upon his name, the matters of his gospel, cause and interest in the world: but still let his righteous judgment be remembered, and all be terminated in the glorious everlasting kingdom.

Is it not much better thus to converse with him that I must be with for ever, about the

place, and the company, and work, and concerns of my perpetual abode, than to be taken up with strangers in my way, and detained by their impertinences?

I have found myself so long in these meditations, that I will but name the rest and tell you what I had further to have treated on, and leave the enlargement to your own meditations.

8. I have no reason to be weary of converse with God, seeing it is that for which all human converse is regardable. Converse with man is only so far desirable as it tendeth to our converse with God: and therefore the end must be preferred before the means.

9. It is the office of Christ, and the work of the Holy Ghost, and the use of all the means of grace, and of all creatures, mercies and afflictions, to reduce our straying souls to God, that we may converse with him and enjoy him.

10. Converse with God is most suitable to those that are so near to death; it best prepareth for it: it is likest to the work that we are next to do. We had rather when death comes, be found conversing with God than with man: it is God that a dying man hath principally to do with: it is his judgment that he is going to; and his mercy that he hath to trust upon: and therefore it concerneth us to draw near him now, and be no strangers to him, lest strangeness then should be our terror.

11. How wonderful a condescension is it that

God should be willing to converse with me; with such a worm and sinful wretch: and therefore how inexcusable is my crime, if I refuse his company, and so great a mercy!

12. Lastly, heaven itself is but our converse with God and his glorified ones, (though in a more perfect manner than we can here conceive.) And therefore our holy converse with him here is the state that is likest heaven, and that prepareth for it, and all the heaven that is on earth.

It remaineth now that I briefly tell you, what you should do to attain and manage this converse with God, in the improvement of your solitude. (For directions in general for walking with God, I reserve for another place.) At present let these few suffice.

Direct. 1. If you would comfortably converse with God, make sure that you are reconciled to him in Christ, and that he is indeed your friend and Father. Can two walk together except they be agreed? Can you take pleasure in dwelling with the consuming fire; or conversing with the most dreadful enemy? Yet this I must add, that every doubting or self-accusing soul may not find a pretence to fly from God. 1. That God ceaseth not to be a Father whenever a fearful soul is drawn to question it or deny it. 2. That in the universal love and grace of God to miserable sinners, and in the universal act of conditional pardon and oblivion, and in the offers of grace, and the readiness of God to receive the

penitent, there is glad tidings that should exceedingly rejoice a sinner; and there is sufficient encouragement to draw the most guilty miserable sinner to seek to God, and sue for mercy. But yet the sweetest converse is for children, and for those that have some assurance that they are children.

But perhaps you will say, that this is not easily attained: how shall we know that he is our friend?

In brief, I answer, if you are unfeignedly friends to God, it is because he first loved you. Prefer him before all other friends, and all the wealth and vanity of the world; provoke him not by wilfulness or neglect; use him as your best friend, and abuse him not by disobedience or ingratitude; own him before all, at the dearest rates, whenever you are called to it; desire his presence; lament his absence; love him from the bottom of your hearts; think not hardly of him; suspect him not; misunderstand him not; hearken not to his enemies; receive not any false reports against him; take him to be really better for you than all the world: do these, and doubt not but you are friends with God, and God with you: in a word, be but heartily willing to be friends to God, and that God should be your chiefest friend, and you may be sure that it is so indeed, and that you are and have what you desire. And then how delightfully may you converse with God!

Direct. 2. Wholly depend on the mediation of Christ, the great reconciler: without him there is no coming near to God: but in his beloved you shall be accepted. Whatever fear of his displeasure shall surprise you, fly presently for safety unto Christ: whatever guilt shall look you in the face, commit yourself and cause to Christ, and desire him to answer for you: when the doors of mercy seem to be shut up against you, fly to him that bears the keys, and can at any time open to you and let you in: desire him to answer for you to God, to your consciences, and against all accusers: by him alone you may boldly and comfortably converse with God; but God will not know you out of him.

Direct. 3. Take heed of bringing particular guilt into the presence of God, if you would have sweet communion with him: Christ himself never reconciled God to sin: and the sinner and sin are so nearly related, that for all the death of Christ, you shall feel that iniquity dwelleth not with God, but he hateth the workers of it, and the foolish shall not stand in his sight; and that if you will presume to sin because you are his children, be sure your sin will find you out. O what fears, what shame, what self-abhorrence and self-revenge will guilt raise in a penitent soul, when it comes into the light of the presence of the Lord! it will unavoidably abate your boldness and your comforts: when you should be sweetly delighting in his pleased face,

and promised glory, you will be befooling yourselves for your former sin, and ready even to tear your flesh, to think that ever you should do as you have done, and use him as you would not have used a common friend, and cast yourselves upon his wrath. But an innocent soul, or pacified conscience, doth walk with God in quietness and delight, without those frowns and fears which are a taste of hell to others.

Direct. 4. If you would comfortably converse with God, be sure that you bring not idols in your hearts: take heed of inordinate affection to any creature. Let all things else be nothing to you, that you may have none to take up your thoughts but God. Let your minds be further separate from them than your bodies: bring not into solitude or to contemplation, a proud, or lustful, or covetous mind: it much more concerneth thee, what heart thou bringest, than what place thou art in, or what work thou art upon. A mind that is drowned in ambition, sensuality or passion, will scarce find God any sooner in a wilderness than in a crowd (unless he be there returning from those sins to God) wherever he seeth him, God will not own and be familiar with so foul a soul. Seneca could say “*Quid prodest totius regionis silentium, si affectus fremunt?*”—“What good doth the silence of all the country do thee, if thou have the noise of raging affections within?” And Gregory saith “*Qui corpore remotus vivit,*” &c.—“He that in

body is far enough from the tumult of human conversation, is not in solitude, if he busy himself with earthly cogitations and desires: and he is not in the city that is not troubled with the tumult of worldly cares or fears, though he be pressed with the popular crowds." Bring not thy house, or land, or credit, or carnal friend along with thee in thy heart, if thou desire and expect to walk in heaven, and to converse with God.

Direct. 5. Live still by faith: let faith lay heaven and earth as it were together. Look not at God as if he were far off: set him always as before you, even as at your right hand. Ps. xvi. 8. Be still with him when you awake. Ps. cxxxix. 18. In the morning thank him for your rest; and deliver up yourself to his conduct and service for that day. Go forth as with him, and to do his work. Do every action with the command of God, and the promise of heaven before your eyes, and upon your hearts. Live as those that have incomparably more to do with God and heaven, than with all this world; that you may say with David, Ps. xxxvii. 25, 26, (as aforecited) "Whom have I in heaven but thee: and there is none on earth that I desire besides thee!" and with Paul, Phil. i. 21, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain." You must shut up the eye of sense, (save as subordinate to faith) and live by faith upon a God, a Christ, and a world that is

unseen, if you would know by experience what it is to be above the brutish life of sensualists, and to converse with God. O christian, if thou hadst rightly learned this blessed life, what a high and noble soul-conversation wouldst thou have! How easily wouldst thou spare, and how little wouldst thou miss the favour of the greatest, the presence of any worldly comfort! City or solitude would be much alike to thee, saving that the place and state would be best to thee, where thou hadst the greatest help and freedom to converse with God. Thou wouldst say of human society, as Seneca, “ *Unus pro populo mihi est, & populus pro uno: mihi satis est unus, satis est nullus.*”—“ One is instead of all the people to me, and the people as one: one is enough for me, and none is enough.” Thus being taken up with God, thou mightest live in prison as at liberty, and in a wilderness as in a city, and in a place of banishment as in thy native land: for the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof: and everywhere thou mayest find him, and converse with him, and lift up pure hands unto him. In every place thou art within the sight of home; and heaven is in thine eye, and thou art conversing with that God, in whose converse the highest angels do place their highest felicity and delight.

How little cause then have all the church’s enemies to triumph, that can never shut up a true believer from the presence of his God, nor,

banish him into such a place where he cannot have his conversation in heaven! The stones that were cast at holy Stephen, could not hinder him from seeing the heavens opened, and Christ sitting at the right hand of God. A Patmos allowed holy John communion with Christ, being there in the spirit on the Lord's day. Rev. i. 9. 10. Christ never so speedily and comfortably owneth his servants, as when the world disowneth them, and abuseth them for his sake, and hurls them up and down as the scorn and off-scouring of all. He quickly found the blind man that he had cured, when once the jews had cast him out. John ix. 35. Persecutors do but promote the blessedness and exceeding joy of sufferers for Christ. Matt. v. 11, 12.

And how little reason then have christians, to shun such sufferings, by unlawful means, which turn to their so great advantage; and to give so dear as the hazard of their souls by wilful sin, to escape the honor, and safety, and commodity of martyrdom!

And indeed we judge not, we love not, we live not as sanctified ones must do, if we judge not that the truest liberty, and love it not as the best condition, in which we may best converse with God. And O how much harder is it to walk with God, in a court, in the midst of sensual delights, than in a prison or wilderness where we have none to interrupt us, and nothing

else to take us up ! It is our prepossessed minds, our earthly hearts, our carnal affections and concupiscence, and the pleasures of a prosperous state that are the prison and the jailors of our souls. Were it not for these, how free should we be, though our bodies were confined to the straightest room ! He is at liberty that can walk in heaven, and have access to God, and make use of all the creatures in the world, to the promoting of this his heavenly conversation : and he is the prisoner whose soul is chained to flesh and earth, and confined to his lands and houses, and feedeth on the dust of worldly riches, or walloweth in the dung and filth of gluttony, drunkenness and lust : that are far from God, and desire not to be near him ; but say to him, depart from us, we would not have the knowledge of thy ways : that love their prison and chains so well, that they would not be set free, but hate those with the cruellest hatred that endeavour their deliverance. Those are the poor prisoners of Satan, that have not liberty to believe, nor to love God, nor converse in heaven, nor seriously to mind or seek the things that are high and honorable : that have not liberty to meditate or pray, or seriously to speak of holy things, nor to love and converse with those that do so : that are tied so hard to the drudgery of sin, that they have not liberty one month, or week, or day, to leave it, and walk with God so much as for a recreation ! But he that liveth in

the family of God, and is employed in attending him, and doth converse with Christ, and the host of holy ones above, in reason should not much complain of his want of friends, or company or accommodations, nor yet be too impatient of any corporal confinement.

Lastly, be sure then most narrowly to watch your hearts, that nothing have entertainment there, which is against your liberty of converse with God. Fill not those hearts with worldly trash, which are made and new-made to be the dwelling-place of God. Desire not the company which would diminish your heavenly acquaintance and correspondency. Be not unfriendly, nor conceited of a self-sufficiency; but yet beware lest under the honest ingenuous title of a friend, a special, faithful, prudent friend, you should entertain an idol, or an enemy to your love of God, or a corrival and competitor with your highest friend: for if you do, it is not the specious title of a friend that will save you from the thorns and briars of disquietment, and from greater troubles than ever you found from open enemies.

O blessed be that high and everlasting friend, who is every way suited to the upright souls! To their minds, their memories, their delight, their love, &c. by surest truth, by fullest goodness, by clearest light, by dearest love, by firmest constancy, &c.—O why hath my drowsy and dark-sighted soul been so seldom

with him! Why hath it so often, so strangely, and so unthankfully passed by, and not observed him, nor hearkened to his kindest calls! O what is all this trash and trouble that hath filled my memory, and employed my mind, and cheated and corrupted my affections, while my dearest Lord hath been days and nights so unworthily forgotten, so contemptuously neglected and disregarded, and loved as if I loved him not! O that these drowsy and those waking nights, those loitered, lost, and empty hours had been spent in the humblest converse with him, which have been dreamed and doted away upon—now I know not what! O my God, how much wiser and happier had I been, had I rather chosen to mourn with thee, than to rejoice and sport with any other! O that I had rather wept with thee, than laughed with the creature! For the time to come let that be my friend, that most befriendeth my dark, and dull, and backward soul, in its undertaken progress, and heavenly conversation! Or if there be none such upon earth, let me here take no one for my friend! O blot out every name from my corrupted heart, which hindereth the deeper engraving of thy name! Ah! Lord, what a stone, what a blind ungrateful thing, is a heart not touched with celestial love! Yet shall I not run to thee, when I have none else that will know me! Shall I not draw near thee, when all fly from me! When daily experience crieth out so loud “NONE

BUT CHRIST: GOD OR NOTHING." Ah foolish heart, that hast thought oft.—Where is that place, that cave or desert, where I might soonest find thee, and fullest enjoy thee? Is it in the wilderness that thou walkest, or in the crowd: in the closet, or in the church? Where is it that I might soonest meet with God? But alas, I now perceive, that I have a heart to find, before I am like to find my Lord! O loveless, lifeless, stony heart; that is dead to him that gave it life, and to none but him! Could I not love, or think, or feel at all, methinks I were less dead than now! Less dead, if dead, than now I am alive! I had almost said—Lord, let me never love more till I can love thee; nor think more on any thing till I can more willingly think of thee! But I must suppress that wish; for life will act: and the mercies and motions of nature are necessary to those of grace. And therefore in the life of nature, and in the glimmerings of thy light, I will wait for more of the celestial life. My God, thou hast my consent! It is here attested under my hand: separate me from what and whom thou wilt so I may but be nearer thee! Let me love thee more, and feel more of thy love, and then let me love or be beloved of the world, as little as thou wilt.

I thought self-love had been a more predominant thing; but now I find that repentance hath its anger, its hatred, and its revenge! I am truly angry with that heart that hath so oft and

foolishly offended thee! Methinks I hate that heart that is so cold and backward in thy love, and almost grudge it a dwelling in my breast! Alas, when love should be the life of prayer, the life of holy meditation, the life of sermons and of holy conference, and my soul in these should long to meet thee, and delight to mention thee, I straggle Lord, I know not whither; or I sit still and wish, but do not rise and run and follow thee; yea, I do not what I seem to do! All is dead, all is dead, for want of love! I often cry, O where is that place, where the quickening beams of heaven are warmest, that my frozen soul might seek it out! But whither ever I go, to city or to solitude, alas, I find it is not place that makes the difference. I know that Christ is perfectly replenished with life and light and love divine; and I hear him as our head and treasure proclaimed and offered to us in the gospel! This is thy record, That he that hath the Son hath life! O why, then is my barren soul so empty! I thought I had long ago consented to thy offer; and then according to thy covenant, both he and life in him are mine! And yet must I still be dark and dead!

Ah! dearest Lord, I say not that I have too long waited; but if I continue thus to wait, wilt thou never find the time of love; and come and own thy gasping worm? Wilt thou never dissipate these clouds, and shine upon this dead and darkened soul? Hath my night no day? Thrust

me not from thee O my God: for that is a hell, to be thrust from God! But sure the cause is all at home, could I find it out, or rather could I cure it! It is sure my face that is turned from God, when I say, his face is turned from me. But if my life must here be out of sight, and hidden in the root (with Christ in God,) and if all the rest be reserved for that better world, and I must here have but these small beginnings, O make me more to love and long for the blessed day of thine appearing, and not to fear the time of my deliverance, nor unbelievably to linger in this Sodom, as one that had rather stay with sin, than come to thee! Though sin hath made me backward to the fight, let it not make me backward to receive the crown: though it hath made me a loiterer in thy work, let it not make me backward to receive that wages, which thy love will give to our pardoned, poor, accepted services. Though I have too oft drawn back, when I should have come unto thee, and walked with thee in thy ways of grace, yet heal that unbelief, and disaffection, which would make me to draw back, when thou callest me to possess thy glory. Though the sickness and lameness of my soul have hindered me in my journey, yet let their painfulness help me to desire to be delivered from them and to be at home, where (without the interposing nights of thy displeasure) I shall fully feel thy fullest love, and walk with thy glorified ones in the

light of thy glory, triumphing in thy praise for evermore. Amen.

But now I have given you these few directions for the improvement of your solitude for converse with God;—lest I should occasion the hurt of those that are unfit for the lesson I have given, I must conclude with this caution (which I have formerly also published,) that it is not melancholy or weak-headed persons, who are not able to bear such exercises, for whom I have written these directions. Those that are not able to be much in serious solitary thoughtfulness, without confusions and distracting suggestions, and hurrying vexatious thoughts, must set themselves for the most part to those duties which are to be done in company by the help of others; and must be very little in solitary duties: for to them whose natural faculties are so diseased or weak, it is no duty, as being no means to do them the desired good; but while they strive to do that which they are naturally unable to endure, they will but confound and distract themselves, and make themselves unable for those other duties which yet they are not utterly unfit for. To such persons therefore instead of ordered, well digested meditations, and much time spent in secret thoughtfulness, it must suffice that they be brief in secret prayer,

and take up with such occasional abrupter meditations as they are capable of, and that they be the more in reading, hearing, conference, and praying and praising God with others: until their melancholy distempers are so far overcome, as that (by the direction of their spiritual guides) they may judge themselves fit for this improvement of their solitude.

FINIS.



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